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# MUCH LOVED BOOKS

*Best Sellers of the Ages*

# Much Loved Books

*Best Sellers of the Ages*

*By* James O'Donnell Bennett

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*New York*

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To

S. H. B.

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# FOREWORD

THE little papers now collected under the title *Much Loved Books* were first printed serially in the Chicago *Tribune* under the title "Best Sellers of the Ages." With the *Tribune's* cordial permission they now are used in book form. The idea of a series of brief, unassuming articles which should emphasize the deathless news value of great books of ancient and modern times had its origin with the editors of the *Tribune*. That idea was worked out along the lines of an assignment to a newspaper reporter. In revising the articles for book form an effort has been made not to blur the thought which was the reason for the assignment—the thought that the songs of Homer and the meditations of Thoreau still are good news.

J. O'D. B.

## IN THE LIBRARIE AT CAMBRIDGE

In that great maze of books I sighed and said,—
It is a grave-yard, and each tome a tombe;
Shrouded in hempen rags, behold the dead,
Coffined and ranged in crypts of dismal gloom,
Food for the worm and redolent of mold,
Traced with brief epitaph in tarnished gold—
Ah, golden lettered hope!—ah, dolorous doom!
Yet 'mid the common death, where all is cold,
And mildewed pride in desolation dwells,
A few great immortalities of old
Stand brightly forth—not tombes but living shrines,
Where from high sainte or martyr virtue wells,
Which on the living yet work miracles,
Spreading a relic wealth richer than golden mines.

J. M. 1627.

From "A Collection of Recente and Witty Pieces by Several Eminente Hands"; London, 1628. The initials J. M. and the date 1627 attached to the sonnet, which has been described as "by far the best" of the "recente and witty pieces" in the old book, prompted the editor of "Notes and Queries" in 1857 to the question, "Is it possible that this may be an early and neglected sonnet of Milton?" In addition to the inherent beauty of "In the Librarie at Cambridge" the speculation has to justify it the fact that John Milton, then in his nineteenth year, was a student at Christ's College, Cambridge, in 1627.

# MUCH LOVED BOOKS

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## I

## THE BIBLE

(Old Testament composed at various periods from about 750 B.C. —"Amos"—to about 160 B.C.—"Daniel." New Testament composed at various periods from 50 A.D. to 150 A.D.)

*I am certain that the constant contact of the Bible with my childish mind was a great mental stimulant as it certainly was the cause of a singular and vague pleasure. The wild poetic parts of the prophecies, with their bold figures, vivid exclamations, and strange Oriental names and images, filled me with a quaint and solemn delight.*

*Just as a child, brought up under the shadow of the great cathedrals of the Old World, wandering into them daily, at morning or eventide, beholding the many colored windows flamboyant with strange legends of saints and angels, and neither understanding the legends nor comprehending the architecture, is yet stilled and impressed, till the old minster grows into his growth and fashions his nature, so this wonderful old cathedral book insensibly wrought a sort of mystical poetry into the otherwise hard and sterile life of New England.*

*Its passionate Oriental phrases, its quaint pathetic stories, its wild, transcendent bursts of imagery, fixed an indelible mark in my imagination. . . . I think no New Englander brought up under the régime established by the Puritans could really estimate how much of himself had actually been formed by this constant face-to-face intimacy with Hebrew literature.*

HARRIET BEECHER STOWE.

THIS is the first of a series of informal sketches about some books that are best sellers because they are best reading. Best sellers of "the trade" are considered phenomenal if they sell briskly for three months. Some do not last three weeks, though making quite a chaffering the while. But Cicero's essays have been on the market nearly twenty centuries, and the Bible has had steadily mounting sales—except for war interludes—ever since it received its finishing touches about the year 150 of the Christian era.

Such books are called classics. That hurts them with us average

folk. But we ought to consider that they are not good because they are old, but old because they are good. Whether it be Boethius' "Consolation of Philosophy" (which, like St. Paul's "Epistles," "The Book of Ser Marco Polo," Raleigh's "History of the World," parts of "Don Quixote," and Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," was written in prison) or Thoreau's "Walden" or Mr. Hardy's "Tess," they are alive to-day as human and cultural documents because, in spite of wars and pillaging and fires and stupid proscriptions and stupider critics and time's tooth and man's ignorance and lassitude, discerning men and women have from age to age been saying: "We must save this! It is too good to lose." They did not always succeed—who would not give almost anything for those lost books of Livy?—but they did pretty well and discriminated sagaciously.

This first little sketch is about the Bible, which is the premier best seller of Christendom, and has been ever since John Gutenberg first put it into type more than four and a half centuries ago. In 1918, the most recent of its normal years, the American Bible society issued 6,040,707 "volumes of Scripture." But theologians say that we average folk are reading the Bible less than our fathers did. Why is this so? It is a good book, colorful, stimulating, a masterpiece—in the King James version—of English style, full of precept extraordinarily applicable to to-day, and, notwithstanding all its railing, its incoherences and contradictions, and its occasional tediousness, it is a much finer, more vital thing than a superstition, a bludgeon, or a sanctified bore. Let us consider.

Two small brothers are wrangling as small brothers, if they be sound and active, ever will. One asserts; the other denies. The first repeats his assertion—some grandiose bit of boyishness which petulance has now reduced to mere mouthing; the second squawks, "O, you're a fool!"

A glow of beatific priggishness envelops the accused and he replies, "But whosoever shall say Thou fool shall be in danger of hell fire. Matthew five, twenty-two."

Smug little imp, no longer little and now grown whimsical, I love thee well, but that day I quailed before thee, as thou meantest I should, and waited sick, weary hours for the fire to consume me.

That is one way not to read the Bible, nor to let it be read. 'Tis to put a bludgeon into the hands of a little child.

Five and thirty years go by.

I am sitting in the presence of an aged rabbi,* soft voiced, slow spoken, venerable, but young in thought and sympathies. Liberal he calls himself; some call him radical. An open book lies before him. It is that book which Christians call the Bible, but which to people of his faith is known as the Holy Scriptures. You may remember that the word Bible is not found in the Bible proper, nor were the collected writings now known to Christendom as the Bible called the Bible until St. Clement so called them about the year 170 of our era, although formerly it was said that St. Chrysostom (John the Golden Mouthed) in the fourth century first used the word in the sense we use it.

In the Greek, from which Clement took the word, it meant merely "little books," and the Greeks in their turn got it from biblos (book) and biblos came from byblus (papyrus), on which books were written.

The forefinger of the old rabbi's brown right hand rested on a passage which, in the English translation of the Bible that was finished in 1611 by the commission of forty-seven theologians appointed by James I, and Bancroft, Archbishop of Canterbury, would be designated as the second verse of the fourth chapter of Genesis.

Musingly he read:

"'And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.'"

Lifting his eyes from the page, he seemed as one looking afar, and for a little while silence rested upon him. Then thus he spake:

"The story of Cain and Abel if taken as the record of individual deeds lacks not pathos and dramatic power. The picture is a solemn one—the whole earth counting but four human beings, yet among those the spirit of envy has taken lodgment. The craftier of two brothers slays the weaker."

* Dr. Emil Gustav Hirsch, born May 22, 1851, in Luxembourg; died, Jan. 7, 1923; for forty-three years rabbi of Sinai Congregation, Chicago.

His eyes again sought the page:

"'And I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass that every one that findeth me shall slay me.'"

A quiet definiteness came into his musing tone. The reader became the expounder.

"Of whom, my son, could Cain have been afraid? There were no others on earth save himself, his feeble father, and his grief-bowed mother." Then the rabbi touched on the flight into the land of Nod, which implied population outside of Eden, and, summing up what things are naïve and contradictory and incredible in the narrative, he remarked, his sad eyes twinkling a little: "To this we come if we pervert the footprints of humanity's development into notes of personal conversations. But, whatever the pathos of the story if taken as a chronicle of the far-off days of the beginning, we know to-day that Cain and Abel are not personal names. They stand as the personified representatives of great cultural movements. This chapter of Genesis is a paragraph in the history of civilization. We have passed beyond the literal, I hope, and we know now that these scriptural narratives were composite documents, unfolding not the history of single families but of great cultural movements. Abel stands for pastoral institutions and habits; Cain typifies agriculture. 'And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.' Here is the beginning of the unending conflict between one civilization and another. The herdsman gives way to the tiller. The nomad loses his right to consideration and the sedentary farmer comes into his own. In these senses we must read the stories of old if we would learn not merely how they rose but what they token. The lowest stage of human development is 'kill,' and of that stage this chapter is an epitome. Pastoral civilization had to pass away when man discovered that to clothe and feed himself he had other resources than his flocks, other resources less capricious. And when man began to see this, the shepherd was doomed and a new phase of human progress sprang into view. This is the meaning of the murder Cain did. It is victorious agriculture. We cannot arrest the onward sweep of development, cruel though its processes are. But one thing we can do! We can remember—we ought to re-

member—that we are our brother's keeper. That responsibility to God for his brother Cain insolently denied. You see, my son, in how many directions this old legend leads us and how the story, if correctly read, is full of strong, sweet accents."

Slowly he closed the book.

From that day the Bible has been a different book to me, not provocative any more of rancors, nor of that intellectual insolence which sometimes gets itself called independence, but an ingratiating book, the eager, poignant, excited—and often terribly exciting—record of man's fallibilities and aspirations, of his slow groping out of darkness toward the light, of his first crude conceptions of what is right, of his weary fashioning, as with hammer blows upon hot metal, of that doctrine of monotheism of which Father Abraham stands forth as first champion and which has done more than any other doctrine to purge the human mind of gross fantasticalities and murderous superstition, and to lead it out of that slavishness which Thoreau once finely called "pagoda worship."

Such, to his heedful listener, was the counsel of the old scholar. From one to whose people the ancient writing was most sacred that listener had heard interpretation that was most human.

He had made the old book manageable.

That is the great thing. For the tragedy of this extensive collection of writings is that, until the time of men so fortunate as to have been born into our more inquisitive and less credulous age, there has been a kind of conspiracy to talk and think and pray cant about this book, and to put under some horrid ban every effort to bring it to the people in a human way. The people of late times resented that—at first by displays of bitterness which were not unwholesome, later by a display of indifference which deprives them of valid entertainment and instruction and of a living part of their culture.

But the book has not been its own enemy nor the enemy of mankind, although its friends—nay, they were more its partisans—seemed sometimes perversely intent upon making it both. Senator Beveridge once mildly remarked that the three greatest orations ever delivered were the Sermon on the Mount, Paul's speech to the Athenians, and Lincoln's Gettysburg address. Immediately there

was a pulling of long faces and zealots got it into the record that "we are conscious of a distinct shock to our religious sensibilities." Why? Did lofty utterance searching out the heart of man's error and aspiration cease to be sacred—in the sense of precious—when Paul, with Dionysius and the woman named Damaris, "and others with them" passed out of the court of the Areopagites? Was it not, rather, a glorious thought that our time also had been vouchsafed another Abraham to stand with God's everlasting men?

Even so humane a scholar as Dean Stanley let himself be counted acquiescent to the ignoble conspiracy that would devitalize and sanctimonize the most vital record of its spiritual adventures which mankind possesses. But the dean was courtier as well as scholar and there is something in his words which, if we examine them minutely, may convey an irony as delicious as it is subtle.

Those words were:

"It would almost seem as if 'Judges' were in the Bible to impress upon us the human, nay barbarian, element which plays its part in sacred history. In any other history we should regard Samson and Jephthah, even Gideon and Barak, not as devout servants of God, but as freebooters, stern sheiks, passionate, revengeful, lax, superstitious."

That is Ciceronian in its ingenuity. "I will not call the villain, Catiline," et cetera. And what streams of light it releases for enfranchised reading!

In short nobody can enjoy this book without abundant aids and a pretty thorough readjustment of traditional points of view.

To say to the unaided one, "Read the Bible," is like dumping a cartload of bricks at a man's feet and saying, "Here's your house."

Do you know that its chronological arrangement is most inexact and baffling?

Do you know that some of its reputed authors never touched it?

Have you ever paused to consider that, although primitive man was making stone implements half a million years ago, the biblical account of creation cannot, by any chronological juggling, be made to credit the race with more than eight thousand years of existence?

Such are certain biblical bafflements.

But the allurements are endless and potent.

Do you know that it contains twenty capital specimens of what we think of as the modern short story? Do you know that an English journal once gravely urged an English statesman to read the eighteenth chapter of Exodus, beginning with the thirteenth verse, and that that passage contains a fundamental of successful statecraft and of what we call "efficiency"?

These, and not routine exegesis and pulpit thumping, are the true aids to enjoyment of the Bible. How profitably they can be employed may be worth further consideration.

Twenty-five years ago * the American congress voted an appropriation for the printing and free distribution by the government of 9,000 copies of the so-called Jefferson Bible. This legislation received some praise. It aroused more censure.

The fact remains that if a Christian wished subtly to persuade a fellow being of other faith, or of no faith, to acceptance of "the life and morals of Jesus of Nazareth"—as President Jefferson named his little compendium—that missioner hardly could find in the whole range of the literature of Christology an instrument better suited to his purpose. Nor does there exist to-day a volume better designed to restore among us average folk, whose knowledge of the Bible, says Dean James S. Stevens of the University of Maine, "has decreased lamentably in the last fifty years," familiarity and sympathy with a grand survey of man's ethical development during a period covering—in the writing of the survey—nearly a thousand years. (That is, counting the time devoted to the composition of both old and new testaments.)

Mr. Jefferson's aim, briefly, was to present a fabric of biography and ethics, all extracted from the New Testament, which should be non-provocative. He was a biblical pacifist. Tradition, ever loving the basest view of mankind, has it that he was an atheist. He was not. He was a reverent agnostic and, for his time—or almost any time—an exceptional scholar. His deleted New Testament omits all passages relating miraculous episodes which the original record declares attended the birth and death of the young preacher and martyr and all miracles which it avers distinguished his tarrying among men. The Jefferson Bible ends with the Scriptural words,

* About 1902.

"There laid they Jesus: and rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed."

The telling comment to which this passage led the good critic, Edwin L. Shuman, was, "And there Mr. Jefferson leaves the stone."

"Miracles," it may be added in the tart words of James Anthony Froude—"miracles come when they are needed."

A high value of the Jefferson Bible for us average readers lies in the brief but substantial comments with which Mr. Jefferson, then President of the United States, elucidated his work. They were written in 1803 in a letter to Dr. Benjamin Rush of Philadelphia, a name honored in the annals of American medicine.

A few of the Jeffersonian sentences on the character of Jesus are here quoted, partly because they are seldom seen, but more because of their soft appeal to the kind of readers whom it is not the purpose to "convert" to any kind of literature, but to *interest* in a very lovely specimen of literature. Those sentences are distinguished by deep tenderness, sound sense and true reverence:

"His parentage was obscure; his condition poor; his education null; his natural endowments great; his life correct and innocent. He was meek, benevolent, patient, firm, disinterested, and of the sublimest eloquence.

"According to the ordinary fate of those who attempt to enlighten and reform mankind, he fell an early victim to the jealousy and combination of the altar and the throne, at about 33 years of age, his reason having not yet attained the maximum of its energy, nor the course of his preaching, which was but of three years at most, having presented occasions for developing a complete system of morals.

"Notwithstanding these disadvantages, a system of morals is presented to us which, if filled up in the true style and spirit of the rich fragments he left us, would be the most perfect and sublime that has ever been taught by man.

"The precepts of philosophy and of the Hebrew code laid hold of action only. He pushed his scrutinies into the heart of man; erected his tribunal in the region of his thought, and purified the waters at the fountain head."

Such words so make for applicability in the study of the Bible that they are worth a million tracts. They are so free from rancor and railing, from exegetical legerdemain, from pettiness and from

partisanship that they search out the heart while they steady the reason. Applicability! Were the body of ethics formulated by Jesus applied by universal consent to-day a distracted and contentious world would be ready for work that matters. Such, in potentiality, is the applicability of the New Testament; such, in reality it may one day be.

Turning back to the Old Testament there are encountered hundreds upon hundreds of passages fraught with an applicability to our day far less lofty and comprehensive than the code Jesus preached, but coming home to fallible man with a directness at once very winning and very homely.

There was a day, about 3,200 years ago, when an elderly Arabian priest named Jethro, who had married his daughter Zipporah to an energetic Hebrew judge and administrator, observed that his gifted son-in-law was on the verge of nervous prostration—distracted by work and worry and by having throngs of people with petty troubles on their minds pressing around him from morning to night. So the priest said: "My son, this will not do! You cannot undertake everything; besides, it is bad for the tribes that you should try to. Clear away these people who are wearing you out, and you them, cease wasting time on details that any man of reasonable sense, honesty, and industry can take care of for you, bring in some help, and do you save yourself for the mighty work that nobody but you can do. Listen to me, Moses! Omit these small matters and you will find that you will live longer and accomplish more."

That is no ribald rewriting of advice which the old Arabian priest gave the eminent soldier and statesman, Moses. It is all set down, though in statelier words, in the Old Testament book called Exodus, together with the fact that Moses acted upon Jethro's counsel. For thus the narrative closes:

"So Moses harkened to the voice of his father-in-law, and did all that he had said. . . . And Moses let his father-in-law depart; and he went his way into his own land."

As to the applicability of Jethro's words, it is hardly so many years ago as the passage is centuries old that the London "Spectator" commended prayerful perusal of that passage to Lord Salis-

bury, then prime minister of England, as containing a principle of civil administration which he would find helpful.

In truth, the Old Testament, although an intensely racial and in parts almost a tribal product, has come to speak with peculiar authority to the occidental world. Why? Because it was passionately concerned with human conduct—as passionately as it was concerned with the development of a rational idea of divinity. That development passed through many grotesque and fearful stages, and it has been a sharp misfortune to mankind that some of the discreditable phases of the development of the idea got themselves accepted as its permanent definitions.

But God, we think now, was not the capricious, malevolent being of the grotesque and fearful stages of the groping toward a rational conception of God—could not have been and been sane. What they thought was God was only a terrific figure set along their anxious way toward a conception of a god whom men could not only worship, if worship they must, but could also respect. Those strong, passionate, reflective tribal administrators and ecclesiastics at times thrust upon other people, and upon remote ages, a god that never existed. But they were moving along the right way and they found—monotheism. Mr. Wells, in the "Outline," tellingly epitomizes the stages:

"There was the belief first of all that Jehovah was the greatest and most powerful of tribal gods, and then that he was a god above all other gods, and at last that he was the only true god."

To grip firmly such an epitome of long spiritual and intellectual processes as Mr. Wells here gives, and in the making of which he is expert, is essential to profitable Bible reading. Without such aids the reader is first befuddled, then repelled.

The Old Testament will not repel us average folk if we approach it as a tremendous human document dealing with people like us, except that they were not tamed, as we are, by the complexities of a social code at once more spacious and more exacting than theirs was. But in essence they were like us. They had, and they explicitly recorded, their scandals that defiled the court and the temple. They had the curse of graft, against which Jesus inveighed, and they had their little ententes and greater ententes,

as when Solomon of Israel and Hiram of Tyre made their agreeable political arrangements.

The passionate, hard-pressed, searching, truculent, acquisitive life they led found voice in a tremendous literature of war-songs, laments, sermons, railings—they raised railing to an art hardy and fine—love lyrics, rhapsodies, riddles, proverbs, prayers, biographies, speeches, and stories.

And stories!

Than them the Bible contains for us average pagans feeling our way into great literature no lure more potent. They are not forerunners but perfect specimens of what we think of as the modern short story. That form the Bible originated, and in that form it excelled. To Dean Stevens I am indebted for a finding list of twenty of the best short stories in the Bible. Thus it runs:

Joseph. Gen. 37-48.
Balaam and Balak. Num. 22-24.
The capture of Jericho. Josh. 6.
The wars of Gideon. Judg. 6-8.
Jephthah's daughter. Judg. 11.
Samson. Judg. 14-16.
Ruth. The entire book.
David and Goliath. I. Sam. 17.
David and Jonathan. I. Sam. 18-20.
Elijah and the prophets of Baal. I. Kings 18.
Naboth's vineyard. I. Kings 21.
The ascension of Elijah. II. Kings 2.
Esther. The entire book.
The three Hebrew children. Dan. 3.
Daniel in the lions' den. Dan. 6.
Jonah. The entire book.
The Good Samaritan. Luke 10:25-37.
The Prodigal Son. Luke 15:11-32.
The healing of the lame man at Bethesda. John 5:1-9.
The shipwreck of Saint Paul. Acts 27.

Enter into the Bible through those stories, together with the following books, and you will find it neither wearisome nor very baffling:

Stevens' "The English Bible," Cohu's "Bible and Modern Thought," Rice's "Old Testament in the Life of To-day," Sanders' "Old Testament Prophecy," Haven McClure's "Contents of the New Testament," Reid's "A Christian's Appreciation of Other Faiths," Mordell's "Literature of Ecstasy"—all recent and not expensive; Moulton's "The Literary Study of the Bible," "The Whole Bible at a Single View," and his "Modern Readers' Bible" (one volume edition). Renan's "Life of

Jesus" is essential. Chapter XIX (Hebrew Scriptures and the Prophets, twenty-eight pages) and Chapter XXIX (Beginnings, Rise, and Divisions of Christianity, forty-one pages), in Wells' "Outline of History," provide valuable framework. And keep an eye out at old bookstores for Moffat's brief "Comparative History of Religions."

As the Bible brought to perfection the short story, so it may be said to have originated what we are wont to account another extremely modern form—that is, free verse. Whitman now is proclaimed its father in England and America, but Whitman took it from the Bible. So did Heine, and Goethe, and Blake, and Milton.

Thus stylistically is this work an inexhaustible treasury of forms and of the deft, sure manipulation of forms. George Saintsbury, most fastidious of critics, says that the best example known to him of absolutely perfect English prose is the sixth and seventh verses of the eighth chapter of the Song of Solomon.

Let us pause upon it:

"Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame.

"Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it: if a man would give all the substance of his house for love, it would utterly be contemned."

## II

## STEVENSON'S "TREASURE ISLAND"

(First published in book form in 1883; published serially a few months earlier in the British periodical, "Young Folks' Budget.")

*This is the kind of stuff a fellow wants. I don't know, except "Tom Sawyer" and the "Odyssey," that I ever liked any romance so well.*
(On "Treasure Island.") ANDREW LANG.

IT all started with a fanciful map and it ended in a fame that bids fair to last as long as any of the glories which literature has bestowed upon her children since that time Homer sat down in the agora to tell a good story of perilous ventures by land and sea.

It really began as a lark, and from first to last there was a boy involved in the affair—first a confident American boy, who, with the terrifying candor of childhood, asked his Scotch stepfather to "try and write something interesting." It was autumn in Scotland and the boy was Lloyd Osbourne.

The stepfather, an essayist and critic and travel writer, was then thirty-one years old. For several years he had been trying, in the face of bitter bad health, to "write something interesting," and the world is now pretty well agreed that he had succeeded. But he had never paid his way in the world—never made by his pen, or otherwise, £200 a year. Sometimes he wondered whether he ever would. "I was, indeed," he confessed long after, "very close on despair."

The Scotch essayist of thirty-one years and the American boy of thirteen frequently were prisoned to the house during that bleak September of 1881, at Braemar in Aberdeenshire, and the boy was amusing himself with cardboard and a shilling box of water colors, and his stepfather joined him, making among other things—for always he had a passion for maps—a fanciful map of a fanciful island that he named Treasure Island. Henry James

once said of this man and the work he did in the world—which runs to more than two dozen spacious volumes—that "the love of youth is the beginning and end of Stevenson's message." And this man, who never grew old in spirit, said of the map he had made as a lark, "It took my fancy beyond expression; it contained harbors that pleased me like sonnets." His leaping imagination promptly peopled his island with daring men and desperate, and put treasure into it, and fanned it with hot, spicy breezes and made the surf to intone mightily around it by day and by night. And strange, fearsome things happened there.

Thus it came about that from a map drawn to while a rainy hour away, and from a boy's hectoring, sprang a tale that for nearly half a century has put crimson spots into the cheeks of succeeding decades of boys and made their eyes shine, and put fiber into their fancy. Like this:

"I began to be horribly frightened, but I kept my head, for all that."

Young James Hawkins, in a dreadful plight surely (Chapter XXIV), said that. All right, let us be like young Hawkins, who was the second boy involved in the affair of "Treasure Island." Let us keep our heads. That is the moral of Stevenson's best seller.

But this is no boys' book solely.

I first read "Treasure Island" when it was new and I was fourteen. I read it again—certainly for the fourth time—this last week. And I am nearly sixty now. But the old spell held. The door knocker could rattle and the telephone could jingle—and be hanged to them both. I was away. I had weighed anchor—thus:

" 'Now, Barbecue, tip us a stave,' cried one voice.

" 'The old one,' cried another.

" 'Ay, ay, mates,' said Long John, who was standing by with his crutch under his arm, and at once broke out in the air and words I knew so well:

" 'Fifteen men on the dead man's chest'—

"And then the whole crew bore chorus:

" 'Yo-ho-ho, and a bottle of rum!'

"And at the third 'ho!' drove the bars before them with a will."

And thus I sailed, and sailed:

"We were heading S. S. W., and had a steady breeze abeam and a quiet sea. The *Hispaniola* rolled steadily, dipping her bowsprit now and then with a whiff of spray. All was drawing alow and aloft; every one was in the bravest spirits, because we were now so near an end of the first part of our adventure."

And sometimes I "began to be horribly frightened"—though I kept my head, I hope—for hardly had I set foot on Treasure Island ere:

"Far away out in the marsh there arose, all of a sudden, a sound like the cry of anger, and then another on the back of it; and then one horrid, long drawn scream. The rocks of the Spyglass reëchoed it a score of times; the whole troop of marsh birds rose again, darkening heaven, with a simultaneous whirr; and long after that death yell was still ringing in my brain, silence had reëstablished its empire, and only the rustle of the redescending birds and the boom of the distant surges disturbed the languor of the afternoon.

" 'John!' said the sailor, stretching out his hand.

" 'Hands off!' cried Silver, leaping back a yard, as it seemed to me, with the speed and security of a trained gymnast.

" 'Hands off, if you like, John Silver,' said the other. 'It's a black conscience that can make you feared of me. But, in heaven's name, tell me what was that?'

" 'That?' returned Silver, smiling away, but warier than ever, his eye a mere pin-point in his big face, but gleaming like a crumb of glass. 'That? O, I reckon that'll be Alan.'

"At this poor Tom flashed out like a hero.

" 'Alan!' he cried. 'Then rest his soul for a true seaman! And as for you, John Silver, long you've been a mate of mine, but you're mate of mine no more. If I die like a dog, I'll die in my dooty. You've killed Alan, have you? Kill me, too, if you can. But I defies you.' "

Well reading that—especially the part about the pirate Long John Silver's eye that was "a mere pin-point in his big face, but *gleaming like a crumb of glass,*" I was minded of the critic, Mr. Richard Le Gallienne, who tells in one of his books—very precise and proper-like—how he "ventured to regret that Mr. Stevenson should continue [our friend was alive then] to squander his great gifts upon the British boy, who cares as much about style as a pig about asparagus."

Don't we, though! British or native, mates, I'll tell 'e we do care about style, and sense it relishingly, too, even though we could not define the difference between style and asparagus. It is this very style of "Treasure Island" that has kept it glowing in the hearts of nearly fifty years of boys and boys of more than fifty years—aye, of sixty, and more, for Mr. Gladstone was seventy-five when, having dipped into the book at a friend's house, he went toddling about London next day to find a copy. Nor was the critic of the *London Saturday Review*—most severe and aloof of journals—a juvenile when he acclaimed the book as the best of its kind since "Robinson Crusoe." And the late Andrew Lang was forty when he wrote to R. L. S. that he had just spent "several hours of unmingled bliss" over it.

A thousand tales as dashingly conceived as "Treasure Island" long since have gone to Davy Jones' locker for the lack of the sinewy, marrowy (one of Stevenson's pet words), swift-moving, simple yet boldly colored and nervously atmospheric style of "Treasure Island." Nervously atmospheric, you might say, means naught. What I mean is that, when Stevenson wanted it to, his style shimmered like the heat-waves over the island or glistered like slipping heaps of coin, as it does here:

" . . . and in a far corner, only duskily flickered over by the blaze, I beheld great heaps of coin and quadrilaterals built of bars of gold. That was Flint's treasure that we had come so far to seek and that had cost already the lives of seventeen men from the *Hispaniola*. How many it had cost in the amassing, what blood and sorrow, what good ships scuttled on the deep, what brave men walking the plank blindfold, what shot of cannon, what shames and lies and cruelty, perhaps no man alive could tell. . . . It was a strange collection. . . . English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Georges and Louises, doubloons and double guineas, and moidores and sequins, the pictures of all the kings of Europe for the last hundred years, strange oriental pieces stamped with what looked like wisps of string or bits of spider's web, round pieces and square pieces, and pieces bored through the middle, as if to wear them round your neck—nearly every variety of money in the world must, I think, have found a place in that collection; and for number I am sure they were like autumn leaves, so that my back ached with stooping and my fingers with sorting them out."

To prevent that treasure from coming into the possession of men who are legitimately and gallantly seeking it is the aim of John Silver, the one-legged sea cook with the heart of Lucifer and the tongue of a Billingsgate fishmonger. Silver's Billingsgate possesses these elements of originality and genius: It is Billingsgate without a profane or filthy word in it. This specimen is representative:

"'Avast, there!' cried Silver. 'Who are you, Tom Morgan? Maybe you thought you was cap'n here, perhaps. By the powers, but I'll teach you better! Cross me, and you'll go where many a good man's gone before, first and last, these thirty year back—some to the yard arms, shiver my timbers! and some by the board, and all to feed the fishes. There's never a man looked me between the eyes and seen a good day a'terwards, Tom Morgan, you may lay to that.'"

It has been remarked by many who have made particular examination of "Treasure Island" that, unfolding though it does the violent adventures of many violent men, it contains not one oath, and yet its vituperation is blistering. The fact is worth noting for the lesson it conveys. The lesson is that the true artist can without the sacrifice of power observe a decent reticence in all things—the true artist.

John Silver is power. As to the coupling of that element in his ruthless nature with his maimed body he was drawn from one of Stevenson's best friends. The statement seems at first glance incredible but we have Stevenson's word for the truth of it. In a letter to William Ernest Henley, poet, essayist, and author of the superb defiance, "Invictus"—you recall its closing stanza,

"It matters not how strait the gate,
How charged with punishment the scroll,
I am the master of my fate,
I am the captain of my soul."

—Stevenson wrote:

"I will now make a confession. It was the sight of your maimed strength and masterfulness that begot John Silver in 'Treasure Island.' Of course, he is not in any other quality or feature the least like you; but the idea of the maimed man, ruling and dreaded by the sound, was entirely taken from you."

In his account of the writing of "Treasure Island," which appears in all the worthy editions of the book, Stevenson made further acknowledgment of his debt to maimed but invincible Henley:

"And then I had an idea for John Silver from which I promised myself funds of entertainment: to take an admired friend of mine, . . . to deprive him of all his finer qualities and higher graces of temperament, to leave him with nothing but his strength, his courage, his quickness, and his magnificent geniality, and to try to express these in terms of the culture of the raw tarpaulin."

Along with its transcendent swashbuckling "Treasure Island" reaches a note of high spirituality. Consider the scene in Chapter XVIII, so simple, so brave, so quiet, and so sterling that boys of right feeling cannot but linger upon the page which tells how grave, quiet, sterling men die. It is the scene of the death of good old Tom Redruth, whom Squire Trelawney had bidden to follow him on this mad voyaging:

" . . . and now, sullen, old, serviceable servant, it was he that was to die.

"The squire dropped down beside him on his knees and kissed his hand, crying like a child.

" 'Be I going, doctor?' he asked.

" 'Tom, my man,' said I, 'you're going home.'

" 'I wish I had had a lick at them with the gun first,' he replied.

" 'Tom,' said the squire, 'say you forgive me, won't you?'

" 'Would that be respectful like, from me to you, squire?' was the answer. 'Howsoever, so be it, amen!'

"After a little while of silence he said he thought somebody might read a prayer. 'It's the custom, sir,' he added apologetically. And not long after, without another word, he passed away.

" '. . . Don't you take on, sir,' he [the captain] said, taking the squire's hand. 'All's well with him; no fear for a hand that's been shot down in his duty to captain and owner. It mayn't be good divinity, but it's a fact.' "

You'll be remembering, lads, you older ones, the maroon they found on the island. Old Ben Gunn, pirate hisself wunst, and by pirates marooned. Three years he had been there alone, thinking and planning and making a go of it somehow, for "wherever a man is," says he, "a man can do for himself." There's another

sustaining motto for you, my hearties! Bit of a philosopher, too, was Ben, and had thought out his troubles to their source. Laid 'em all to chuck-farthen [pitching pennies] 'e did—"chuckfarthen on the blessed gravestones," as you shall hear:

"'I was a civil, pious boy and could rattle off my catechism that fast as you couldn't tell one word from another. And here's what it come to, Jim, and it begun with chuck-farthen on the blessed gravestones! That's what it begun with, but it went further'n that; and so my mother told me, and predicked the whole, she did, the pious woman! But it were Providence that put me here. I've thought it all out in this here lonely island, and I'm back on piety. You don't catch me tasting rum so much; but just a thimbleful for luck, of course, the first chance I have. I'm bound I'll be good, and I see the way to. And Jim'—looking all round him and lowering his voice to a whisper—'I'm rich.'"

And so they sailed, encountering the bright face of danger, sorting the good from the bad of humankind, and finding at last that greater treasure, which was the proving of themselves. For they had kept their heads.

From a source I have forgotten and so cannot here acknowledge, I long ago obtained the full text of the old chantey which sounds the opening note of "Treasure Island" and runs as a leitmotif through it:

FIFTEEN MEN ON THE DEAD MAN'S CHEST

Fifteen men on the dead man's chest,
Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum!
Drink and the devil had done for the rest,
Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum!

For they drank and drank and got so drunk,
Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum!
Each from the dead man bit a chunk,
Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum!

The bottle burst and the men accurst,
Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum!
Sucked his blood to quench their thirst,
Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum!

They sucked his blood and crunched his bones,
Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum!

When suddenly up came Davy Jones,
  Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum!

"My men," says he, "you must come with me,"
  Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum!
And he grinned with a horrible kind of glee;
  Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum!

Davy Jones had a big black key,
  Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum!
It was for his locker beneath the sea,
  Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum!

He winked and he blinked like an owl in a tree,
  Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum!
And he sunk 'em all to the bottom of the sea,
  Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum!

Now, all take warning by this 'ere song,
  Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum!
Never drink whisky so devilish strong,
  Yo-ho-ho! and a bottle of rum!

# III

## BURNS AND "HIGHLAND MARY"

### *WHY BURNS SANG*

*A peasant born in a cottage that no sanitary inspector in these days would tolerate for a moment; struggling with desperate effort against pauperism, almost in vain; snatching at scraps of learning in the intervals of toil, as it were, with his teeth; a heavy, silent lad, proud of his plowing. All of a sudden, without preface or warning, he breaks out into exquisite song, like a nightingale from the brushwood, and continues singing as sweetly—with nightingale pauses—till he dies. A nightingale sings because he cannot help it; he can only sing exquisitely, because he knows no other way. So it was with Burns. What is this but inspiration? One can no more measure or reason about it than one can measure or reason about Niagara.*

("Miscellanies Literary and Historical.") LORD ROSEBERY.

IN midsummer of the year 1796 Robert Burns lay dying in a meager tenement in Dumfries. He lay dying the whiles of cursing a haberdasher to whom he owed a bill of £10 and who threatened to jail him. There is no bitterer irony in all the mournful annals of the poets. It is as if an angel, caught by trivial snares, railed against the disarray of his wings. Those death-bed counselors who elect untimely to admonish bend over him, urging him to express belief and trust in Him whom they officiously call his Lord. A gleam of the old bedevilment flashes from the suffering man, and, half in ribaldry, half in wrath, he replies, "Hush! hush! In a hundred

TO A MOUSE

*On Turning Her Up in Her Nest with the Plow, November, 1785*

[Stanza I: sleekit = sleek; brattle = shrill chattering; pattle = stick for cleaning plow.]

*Wee, sleekit, cow'rin', tim'rous beastie,*
*Oh, what a panic's in thy breastie!*
*Thou need na start awa sae hasty,*
*Wi' bickering brattle!*
*I wad be laith to rin an' chase thee,*
*Wi' murd'ring pattle!*

*I'm truly sorry man's dominion*
*Has broken nature's social union,*
*An' justifies that ill opinion*
*Which makes thee startle*
*At me, thy poor earth-born companion*
*An' fellow-mortal!*

[Stanza III: daimenicker = occasional ear of corn; thrave = sheaf; lave = what's left.]

*I doubt na, whyles, but thou may thieve;*
*What then? poor beastie, thou maun live!*
*A daimenicker in a thrave*
*'S a sma' request:*
*I'll get a blessin' wi' the lave,*
*And never miss 't!*

[Stanza IV: big = build; snell = biting or bitter; foggage = forage.]

*Thy wee bit housie, too, in ruin!*
*Its silly wa's the win's are strewin'!*
*An' naething, now, to big a new ane,*
*O' foggage green!*
*An' bleak December's winds ensuin',*
*Baith snell and keen!*

[Stanza V: coulter = sharp fore iron of a plow.]

*Thou saw the fields laid bare an' waste,*
*An' weary winter comin' fast,*
*An' cozie here, beneath the blast,*
*Thou thought to dwell,*
*'Till crash! the cruel coulter past*
*Out thro' thy cell.*

[Stanza VI: but = without; hald = abiding place; cranreuch = hoar-frost; thole = to endure.]

*That wee bit heap o' leaves an' stibble*
*Has cost thee mony a weary nibble!*
*Now thou's turn'd out, for a' thy trouble,*
*But house or hald,*
*To thole the winter's sleety dribble,*
*An' cranreuch cauld!*

[Stanza VII: no thy lane = not alone; agley = awry.]

*But, Mousie, thou art no thy lane,*
*In proving foresight may be vain:*
*The best laid schemes o' mice an' men,*
*Gang aft agley,*
*An' lea'e us nought but grief and pain*
*For promis'd joy!*

years they will be worshipping me."

A Scotchman communicated that story to Longfellow after reading Longfellow's verses addressed to Burns which end:

"His presence haunts this room to-night,
A form of mingled mist and light,
From that far coast.
Welcome beneath this roof of mine!
Welcome! this vacant chair is thine,
Dear guest and ghost!"

The Scotchman deprecated the lines, saying, "The last verse of your poem made me feel that it was an effort to hold fellowship and friendly intercourse with one in the place of eternal woe."

*"Hush! hush! In a hundred years they will be worshipping me."*

The just years work strange fulfillments. It is the twenty-fifth day of January, 1859, and the scene is Boston—the banquet room of the old Parker House. The famous of the illustrious town are assembled to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Robert Burns. A

tall, spare man approaching sixty, as pure a spirit as goodness and philosophy ever parented, rises in his place at the speakers' table to make the closing speech of the program.

[Stanza VIII: ee = eye.]

*Still thou art blest, compar'd wi' me!*
*The present only toucheth thee:*
*But, och! I backward cast my ee,*
*On prospects drear!*
*An' forward, tho' I canna see,*
*I guess an' fear!*

"He looked," says Lowell, who in a precious half-page has recorded the appearance of Ralph Waldo Emerson on that occasion,—"he looked far away over the heads of his hearers, with a vague kind of expectation, as into some private heaven of invention, and the winged period came at last, obedient to his spell."

Now amid a silence that only breathes, now amid brief rushes of applause, he is coming to the closing half-page of perhaps the most perfect after-dinner speech in the literature of that kind:

". . . But I am detaining you too long. The memory of Burns, —I am afraid heaven and earth have taken too good care of it to leave us anything to say. The west winds are murmuring it. Open the windows behind you, and harken for the incoming tide, what the waves say of it. The doves perching always on the eaves of the Stone Chapel opposite may know something about it. Every name in broad Scotland keeps his fame bright. The memory of Burns,—every man's, every boy's and girl's head carries snatches of his songs, and they say them by heart, and, what is strangest of all, never learned them from a book, but from mouth to mouth. The wind whispers them, the birds whistle them, the corn, barley, and bulrushes hoarsely rustle them—nay, the music boxes at Geneva are framed and toothed to play them, the hand-organs of the Savoyards in all cities repeat them, and the chimes of bells ring them in the spires. They are the property and the solace of mankind."

Judge Hoar of Concord was among those who heard the words. "White-hot iron we are familiar with," he said long afterward, "but white-hot silver is what we do not often look upon, and his inspiring address glowed like silver fresh from the cupel." In no canting sense, but in the loving sense—love that forgave much and was thankful for more—they were words of worship. "Every word," says Lowell's record, "seemed to have just dropped down

to him from the clouds. . . . 'My dainty Ariel!' he seemed murmuring to himself as he cast down his eyes, as if in deprecation of the frenzy of approval. . . . It was an interesting study, how the quick sympathy ran flashing from face to face down the long tables, like an electric spark thrilling as it went, and then exploded in a thunder of plaudits."

*"The memory of Burns,—I am afraid heaven and earth have taken too good care of it to leave us anything to say."*

That was the admonition of a great man. A little man wisely may heed it. And so heeding, I think I do better to go to Burns' book than seek new things to say about him. There are none. A hundred and forty-one years of worshipful utterance—I count from the appearance of the pathetic little Kilmarnock edition in 1786—has said them all.

Burns' poems are his complete biography and commentary. In them he told his loves, his joys, his errors, his bitter regrets, his blazing rebellions, his piteous defeats. He sang of the fireside that sheltered him, of the fields that nurtured and taught him, of the taverns that ruined him, of the women who loved and forgave him and whose hearts he broke. Divine plowboy, errant lover, tippler, sinner, he is visible at full length, in his angelic tenderness, in his wanton wrongheadedness, in his now exultant, now contrite heart-cries. These are his living biographies, ringing with his laughter, wet with his tears, crackling with his revolt, tragic with his penitence and his capitulation.

Study then these things. Study the elaborated—perhaps over-elaborated "Cotter's Saturday Night"—which is in his classic and more or less imitative manner, and which vouchsafes a more vivid picture of the kinsfolk, the boyhood, the early home, and the homely ways of this man than memory can paint you of your own childhood. Study then—nay, not study, but rejoice in—the lyrics, spontaneous and incomparable, which have come to be more truly in his classic manner because—strange wizardry of untutored genius!—by means of them he made a rustic dialect classic. He incorporated the speech of a region into the literature of an empire and a republic.

To the most divergent of mankind he spoke a universal tongue. The flamboyant emancipator Colonel Ingersoll said, "The first man that let up the curtain in my mind, that ever opened a blind, that ever allowed a little sunshine to straggle in, was Robert Burns." He called him "the peasant-prince," and said that if every copy of Burns were destroyed he could from memory restore more than half the poems; geologist Hugh Miller declared that, in similar case, he could restore the best of them entire and much of the best in the others. In the year 1821, at the Whittier homestead in Haverhill, a shy Quaker lad of fourteen years stood entranced and silent in the firelight while the village schoolmaster, Joshua Coffin, read aloud to the elders the poems of Burns. Then was touched to life the gift of song in John Greenleaf Whittier. Half a century later he commemorated in his lovely stanzas to Burns that hour of his soul's awakening and remembered how in the morning of his life—

> "New light on home-seen nature beamed,
> New glory over woman,
> And daily life and duty seemed
> No longer poor and common."

The national pastoral of Scotland gave to us our national pastoral. "The Cotter's Saturday Night" was the parent of Whittier's "Snowbound."

Song fell from the lips of Burns as easily as the words of daily greeting and the frequent commonplace fall from the lips of other men. In November, 1785, when he was six and twenty, he is plowing the meager home fields. He is unknown save to his countryside, and there known only as roysterer and philanderer with a pretty gift for ballad and blarney. "Open your eyes," said one of the Ayrshire lasses, "and shut your ears wi' Rob Burns, and there's nae fear o' your heart; but close your eyes and open your ears, and you'll lose it." And so it was on this Novem-

HIGHLAND MARY

*Ye banks, and braes, and streams around*
*The castle o' Montgomery,*
*Green be your woods, and fair your flowers,*
*Your waters never drumlie!*
*There simmer first unfauld her robes,*
*And there the langest tarry;*
*For there I took the last fareweel*
*O' my sweet Highland Mary.*

*How sweetly bloom'd the gay green birk!*
*How rich the hawthorn's blossom!*
*As underneath their fragrant shade*
*I clasp'd her to my bosom!*
*The golden hours, on angel wings,*
*Flew o'er me and my dearie;*
*For dear to me, as light and life,*
*Was my sweet Highland Mary!*

*Wi' mony a vow, and lock'd embrace,*
*Our parting was fu' tender;*
*And, pledging aft to meet again,*
*We tore oursels asunder;*
*But, oh! fell Death's untimely frost,*
*That nipt my flower sae early!—*
*Now green's the sod, and cauld's the clay,*
*That wraps my Highland Mary!*

*Oh pale, pale now, those rosy lips,*
*I aft hae kiss'd sae fondly!*
*And clos'd for aye the sparkling glance*
*That dwelt on me sae kindly!*
*And mouldering now in silent dust*
*That heart that lo'ed me dearly—*
*But still within my bosom's core*
*Shall live my Highland Mary!*

ber day when the coulter of Rob's plow "turned up mousie in her nest." He was to say something then that was to make the world open its ears to him—and by that act lose its heart to him forever. He was to do a perfect thing. To me, the poem "To a Mouse" is his highest achievement in both form and feeling, though many a lover of Burns would make other choice of perfection. I have studied it over and over, line by line, and find coupled with its heavenly pity a delicacy of craftsmanship, an economy of means, and a sure poise which command that kind and degree of wonder and rapture which is vindicated by happy tears. This poem is not "pathos" or "prettiness"; it is pity flowing back and forth from the great soul of the man to that tiny, shuddering, helpless creature at his feet. There is no trouble in it that is not actual and grave. The fall of Ilium was not more woeful than the tearing asunder of that "wee bit housie."

The fields where he plowed the straight furrow that was his boast were this man's school; not silent to him, but vocal with joy and with pain. The helpless and the hurt were his teachers. To them he was akin, and when he sang of his own heartache, of his vanished love, of his longings unfulfilled, he sang not as the self-conscious poet sings but as sings the bird bereft and alone when the shadows fall. He sang of Highland Mary.

## IV

## WASHINGTON IRVING'S "SKETCH-BOOK"

(First published in parts in 1819; first published in book form in 1820.)

*Every reader has his first book; I mean to say, one book among all others which in early youth first fascinates his imagination, and at once excites and satisfies the desires of his mind. To me this first book was "The Sketch-Book" of Washington Irving. I was a schoolboy when it was published, and read each succeeding number with ever increasing wonder and delight, spellbound by its pleasant humor, melancholy tenderness, its atmosphere of revery—nay, even by its gray-brown covers, the shaded letters of its title, and the fair clear type which seemed an outward symbol of its style. How many delightful books the same author has given us. . . . Yet still the charm of "The Sketch-Book" remains unbroken; and whenever I open its pages, I open also that mysterious door which leads back into the haunted chambers of youth.*

(At the Irving memorial meeting, Boston, 1859.)

HENRY W. LONGFELLOW.

ONE hundred and eight years ago Rip Van Winkle stepped out of a twenty-five-page story to become a citizen of the world.

Thus is Rip the marvel of the unassuming volume called "The Sketch-Book"—which, published under the pseudonym "Geoffrey Crayon," was the pride and pleasure of our great-grandparents, and is to-day a steady seller in England and America.

It has been said—and first said, I think, by Professor Smith of the Naval Academy at Annapolis—that during the century of American literature which began with Washington Irving and his "Sketch-Book," our country gave to fiction six characters whom the world seems permanently to have adopted, and whose names are universal coinage among persons old and young, gentle and simple.

Rip was the first of them to step beyond our frontiers into this world-company. Cooper's Leatherstocking followed him. Then Mrs. Stowe's Uncle Tom, and Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer and

Huckleberry Finn, and Joel Harris' Uncle Remus. All save Rip required books—some of them long books—to place them enduringly in the minds and affections of mankind. Less than seven thousand words gave Rip his universality and—as one loosely uses the word—his immortality. You could print the whole tale in less than a page of a newspaper.

The story is a vignette but it creates an effect of spaciousness and of rich detail seldom attained by an episodic picture covering square yards of canvas. Rip is as thoroughly known to us as Ulysses and Don Quixote and Vicar Primrose are known—and by many more of us, for we learn him, lock, stock and barrel, in a leisurely, happy hour. The others, because of the size of the canvas, we too often merely know *about*. Rip we *know*.

It has been so from the early years of his celebrity. Eleven years after "The Sketch-Book" was published in England, Oxford gave Irving the degree of doctor of laws. One of the cries that greeted him from the students who were assembled in the senate hall to view the ceremony of installation was, "Has Rip Van Winkle waked up yet?"

While we are passing, here is an odd though meaningless coincidence about the Van Winkles. The first printer of "The Sketch-Book" in America was C. S. Van Winkle of New York City. The edition was 2,000 copies selling at seventy-five cents each, and Irving told Van Winkle that it did him "great credit as a specimen of American typography."

"Rip Van Winkle," the purest gem among the thirty-four gems in this volume, possessed qualities bound to captivate the general fancy. Theme and scene were fresh, the adventure eerie, the style bewitching. But those gifts which an exquisite craftsman brought to bear on his work were supplemented by another, and it was the other which produced an authentic masterpiece in little.

That gift was the gift for selection, and nowhere in Irving's many books is it more tellingly illustrated than in the fifth paragraph of this tale, where in fewer than 200 words he draws Rip at full length as huntsman, citizen, and pathetic figure who has never found his work in the world but who, by being wholly reconciled to the deprivation, becomes a jovial figure.

"The great error in Rip's composition was an insuperable aversion to all kinds of profitable labor. It could not be from the want of assiduity or perseverance; for he would sit on a wet rock, with a rod as long and heavy as a Tartar's lance, and fish all day without a murmur, even though he should not be encouraged by a single nibble. He would carry a fowling-piece on his shoulder for hours together, trudging through woods and swamps, and up hill and down dale, to shoot a few squirrels or wild pigeons. He would never refuse to assist a neighbor even in the roughest toil, and was a foremost man at all country frolics for husking Indian corn, or building stone fences; the women of the village, too, used to employ him to run their errands, and to do such little odd jobs as their less obliging husbands would not do for them. In a word, Rip was ready to attend to anybody's business but his own; but as to doing family duty, and keeping his farm in order, he found it impossible."

N. P. Willis who, together with a fluency that lured him into shoddy writing, had the gift of happy phrases, never put together a happier one than when he wrote of Irving's "couchant humor and philosophic inevitableness of perception which form the strong undercurrent of his genius."

Irving looked at life with genial wonderment; not weighed down by its perplexities, getting the savor and tang of them rather, and rolling them as a morsel under his tongue. He accepted life with the trustfulness of youth, but, even in the writings of his younger years, he surveys it with the sagacity of mellow age. It hath a thousand times been said that of all the characters in the imaginative literature of our language Rip has received the most affection and tolerance and has deserved the least. How does this come to pass? By the suavity with which Irving lays in the background of Rip's woes. Honest purpose, industry, sense of responsibility are possessed by Dame Van Winkle, but her expression of them is hard and unlovely. Rip's deficiencies are fundamental and comprehensive, but Rip as a fellow man is utterly disarming because he is thoroughly reconciled to everything —including himself. He has the inertia of perfect amiability, and there is no resisting that.

And Wolf, whom Joseph Jefferson and Dion Boucicault renamed Schneider in their stage version of the story—is not Wolf equally for all time?

" . . . True it is, in all points of spirit befitting an honorable dog, he was as courageous an animal as ever scoured the woods; but what courage can withstand the ever-during and all-besetting terrors of a woman's tongue? The moment Wolf entered the house his crest fell, his tail drooped to the ground, or curled between his legs, he sneaked about with a gallows air, casting many a sidelong glance at Dame Van Winkle, and at the least flourish of a broomstick or ladle he would fly to the door with a yelping precipitation."

I know no more deftly—because so reticently—managed effect in the literature of the American short story than the recurrence of the Wolf theme in "Rip Van Winkle." After Rip wakes from the long sleep—

"Wolf, too, had disappeared, but he might have strayed away after a squirrel or a partridge. He whistled after him, and shouted his name, but all in vain; the echoes repeated his whistle and shout, but no dog was to be seen."

And when the old man descends into the village:

"A half-starved dog that looked like Wolf was skulking about it. Rip called him by name, but the cur snarled, showed his teeth and passed on. This was an unkind cut indeed. 'My very dog,' sighed poor Rip, 'has forgotten me!' . . . —he called loudly for his wife and children—the lonely chambers rang for a moment with his voice, and then all again was silent."

The pungent John Macy says in his aggressive little book called "The Spirit of American Literature" something about "Rip Van Winkle" which indicates that even John Macy can feel high regard for a work of art more than three weeks off the press. He says:

"Irving's tale is so simple, so familiar, that in re-reading it one may easily take it for granted and not be struck by its genius. To be convinced that it is a masterpiece one needs but to reflect how infrequently such a tender weanling is adopted as the child of time. A little thing that happens seldom is important."

Of the scene of the awakening Professor Smith used to say to the cadets, "It is all very simple, but it is all very fine art," and he would tell them why it was very fine art. That part you will find retold in his stimulating book, "What Can Literature Do for Me?"

For variety of matter, coupled with an urbane and ingratiating manner of presentation, is there another volume in our literature comparable to "The Sketch-Book"? Among the four and thirty papers are travel pictures, legends, tales of sentiment, sketches of rustic customs and festivals in England and of Indian annals in our country, easy-going excursions down byways of history and biography, literary musings, and the fragrant fancies and gnomic utterances of a mind well read, well traveled, well disposed. A companion who never obtrudes himself, but who is always by our side with sagacious comment, or pensive retrospect, or pretty, fleeting imagery, attends us in these strollings—a man whom Longfellow, seeing him in Madrid when Irving was forty and was writing "The Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus," thus describes:

" . . . all mirth and good humor . . . a most beautiful countenance, and at the same time a very intellectual one . . . some halting and hesitating in his conversation, and says very pleasant, agreeable things, in a husky, weak, peculiar voice."

About anything this companion of ours can be charming. I believe there never was another American writer who made so many boys fall in love with travel and with books as Irving did—and still does, I hope. Once he is standing with us in the Athenæum in Liverpool and he sees an old man enter the library—"a noble Roman style of countenance; a head that would have pleased a painter" . . . and eyes that "still beamed with the fire of a poetic soul." This is Roscoe, great citizen of Liverpool, great banker once, but now impoverished, and great historian of the Medici. "I drew back," says our companion after hearing the name, "with an involuntary feeling of veneration." Then he tells us the sad heroic story of Roscoe's misfortunes, and how the parting with his books "seems to have touched upon his tenderest feelings, and to have been the only circumstance that could provoke the notice of his muse." And while we are listening Irving drifts into one of the tenderest and most melodious passages of English known to me—a passage I so love that for many a year it has hung above the fireplace of my bookroom, whispering to me of the quiet friends there assembled:

"The scholar only knows how dear these silent yet eloquent companions of pure thoughts and innocent hours become in the seasons of adversity. When all that is worldly turns to dross around us, these only retain their steady value. When friends grow cold, and the converse of intimates languishes into vapid civility and commonplace, these only continue the unaltered countenance of happier days, and cheer us with that true friendship which never deceived hope nor deserted sorrow."

Often, too, our companion lets fall sententious utterances by the way. That does not surprise us for this is the Irving who invented the phrase "the almighty dollar," and another of his gnomic bits—it comes in the tale about Rip—is this:

"A tart temper never mellows with age, and a sharp tongue is the only edged tool that grows keener with constant use."

And this, from "The Broken Heart":

"A woman's whole existence is a history of the affections."

Another time as we wander with him in the Highlands of the Hudson he takes to quizzing himself, a pastime in which he can be very droll, and he tells us how his admiration of a good fisherman's good writing once lured him into the decision to become a fisherman. But it was no go:

"For my part, I was always a bungler at all kinds of sport that required either patience or adroitness, and had not angled above half an hour before I had completely 'satisfied the sentiment,' and convinced myself of the truth of Izaak Walton's opinion, that angling is something like poetry—a man must be born to it. I hooked myself instead of the fish; tangled my line in every tree; lost my bait; broke my rod; until I gave up the attempt in despair, and passed the day under the trees, reading old Izaak; satisfied that it was his fascinating vein of honest simplicity and rural feeling that had bewitched me and not the passion for angling."

Few reading men there be, I think, who are not fishermen, who have not gone through that experience—only to learn in half an hour that it was Izaak's book and not rod or line or pool that had baited the passion. And that is part of the charm of Irving—he is always so comfortably and genially of us and *with* us—always such good company. Godwin, the philosopher and agitator who

wrote "Caleb Williams," once put it tellingly in his tribute to "The Sketch-Book" when it was new:

"The author powerfully conciliates himself to our kindness and affection . . . and one wonders, while reading him, that nobody ever said these things before."

When he launched "The Sketch-Book" Irving, writing in the third person, said:

". . . the author, . . . does not aspire to those high honors which are the reward of loftier intellects, yet it is the dearest wish of his heart to have a secure and cherished though humble corner in the good opinion and kind feelings of his countrymen."

Thirty years passed and an American reviewer, whose name, unfortunately, is lost but whose words are preserved in Pierre Irving's life of his uncle, said:

"Little did he then anticipate that 'the humble corner' he coveted in the affections of his countrymen should prove to be the most favored spot."

Three quarters of a century have passed since those sweet and spontaneous words came from the unknown pen. They still are true.

At the time his inheritance was wiped out by unfortunate ventures Irving wrote from England to his brother Ebenezer, "I have nothing now to leave my brothers but a blessing, and that they have whenever I think of them."

It is so that men think of him, for they bless him with their thoughts of the innocent and happy hours he has conferred.

# V

## THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF BENVENUTO CELLINI

(Composed between the years 1558 and 1571 but not published in book form until 1730.)

*It gives me pleasure to hear from your worship that you like the simple narrative of my life in its present rude condition better than if it were filed and retouched by the hand of others, in which case the exact accuracy with which I have set all things down might not be so apparent as it is. In truth, I have been careful to relate nothing whereof I had a doubtful memory, and have confined myself to the strictest truth, omitting numbers of extraordinary incidents out of which another writer would have made great capital.*

BENVENUTO CELLINI.

(In a letter to the historian, poet and critic, Benedetto Varchi.)

*From the pages of this book the Genius of the Renaissance, incarnate in a single personality, beams forth and speaks to us.*

JOHN ADDINGTON SYMONDS.

*And metal, under thy hand, O Benvenuto, becomes lace.*

("Visions et Reflets.") PAUL HUBERE.

TALKING of autobiographies, Mark Twain checked off, as to credibility, four of the great ones and said: "One believes St. Simon and Benvenuto and partly believes the Margravine of Bayreuth" (Frederick the Great's sister). "There are," he added, "things in the confession of Rousseau that one must believe."

Thus does Benvenuto Cellini all but head the list made by a searching man not given to taking his opinions ready made.

Benvenuto himself said you could believe him. He said it in as ingratiating a half page of introduction as you will find in the kind of literature of which his book is a preëminent specimen —"one of the most singular and fascinating books in existence" some very sober speaking authorities on both the Renaissance and literature call it. From the first lines of his book Benvenuto

cozens us, just as he cozened popes and an emperor and a king, and whole colleges of cardinals, and trustful women without end.

How sedately Benvenuto begins. On his first page he might be a blessed bishop, or a president emeritus, laying down the burden at fifty-eight with the consciousness of life's work well done. How suave, yet how scrupulous, he is—"All men of whatsoever quality" —but first take a sentence of him in the melodious Tuscan, to get the music of a work that lay 200 years forgotten in the Florentine archives before it was given to the world, and then came out of dusty oblivion alive and laughing and cozening and piqueing—so alive that it fulfills the first office of a great book; it imparts the sense of life: and so fraught with wild laughter and joy of achievement that men smile when they revert to it.

"All men of whatsover quality":

"Tutti gli uomini d'ogni sorte, che hanno fatto qualche cosa che sia virtuosa o si veramente che le virtù somigli, doverieno, essendo veritieri e da bene, di lor propia mano descrivere la loro vita; ma non si doverrebbe cominciare una ta bella impresa prima che passato l'età de' quarant' anni."

And now Anglice:

"All men of whatsoever quality they be, who have done anything of excellence, or which may properly resemble excellence, ought, if they are persons of truth and honesty, to describe their life with their own hand; but they ought not to attempt so fine an enterprise till they have passed the age of forty. This duty occurs to my own mind, now that I am traveling beyond the term of fifty-eight years, and am in Florence, the city of my birth. Many untoward things I can remember, such as happen to all who live upon our earth; and from those adversities I am now more free than at any previous period of my career—nay, it seems to me that I enjoy greater content of soul and health of body than ever I did in bygone years. I can also bring to mind some pleasant goods and some inestimable evils, which, when I turn my thoughts backward, strike terror in me, and astonishment that I should have reached this age of fifty-eight, wherein, thanks be to God, I am still traveling prosperously forward."

Altogether disarming, is it not? A grave, sweet soul, you would say, a shade garrulous, more than a little vain, but so tender, as witness this about his coming into the world, when his

mother, feeling precisely as she did on a similar interesting occasion, was confident that the child would be a girl:

" . . . The midwife, who knew that they were expecting a girl, after she had washed the baby and wrapped it in the fairest white linen, came softly to my Father Giovanni and said: 'I am bringing you a fine present such as you did not anticipate.' My father, who was a true philosopher, was walking up and down, and answered: 'What God gives me is always dear to me'; and when he opened the swaddling clothes he saw with his own eyes the unexpected male child. Joining together the palms of his old hands, he raised them with his eyes to God and said: 'Lord, I thank thee with my whole heart; this gift is very dear to me; let him be Welcome.' All the persons who were there asked him joyfully what name the child should bear. Giovanni would make no other answer than 'Let him be Welcome—Benvenuto'; and so they resolved, and this name was given me at holy baptism, and by it I still am living with the grace of God."

Thus with the benediction of "the old hands" were seventy-one lively years released upon a world that quailed before Benvenuto Cellini when he passed by. Cross him, speak ill of his craftsmanship, choose the wrong word in converse with him, and he became a foaming Mercutio—"And but one word with one of us? Couple it with something; make it a word and a blow." It needs only Benvenuto's book to prove how veritable are Shakespeare's Italian scenes.

Pompeo, a Milanese jeweler, had crossed Benvenuto in negotiations over work to be done for Pope Clement VII. Let Benvenuto tell it:

"When Pompeo had stood there time enough to say two Ave Marias he laughed derisively in my direction; and going off, his fellows also laughed and wagged their heads, with many other insolent gestures. My companions wanted to begin the fray at once; but I told them hotly that I was quite able to conduct my quarrels to an end by myself, and that I had no need of stouter fighters than I was; so that each of them might mind his business."

Left alone, Benvenuto overtakes his man—and that is the end of Pompeo the Milanese:

"Some business or other made him enter the apothecary's shop which stood at the corner of Chiavica, and there he stayed a while transacting it. I had just been told that he had boasted of the insult which

he fancied he had put upon me; but be that as it may, it was to his misfortune; for precisely when I came up to the corner, he was leaving the shop, and his bravi had opened their ranks and received him in their midst. I drew a little dagger with a sharpened edge, and breaking the line of his defenders, laid my hands upon his breast so quickly and coolly, that none of them were able to prevent me. Then I aimed to strike him in the face; but fright made him turn his head round; and I stabbed him just beneath the ear. I only gave two blows, for he fell stone dead at the second. I had not meant to kill him; but as the saying goes, blows are not dealt by measure."

"Blows are not dealt by measure." The apothegm still holds good. Mr. Dempsey plaintively echoed it after a memorable occasion still in dispute.

Thus in two typical bits from his book you have Benvenuto from the cradle to—other men's graves.

There is no more fantastic or contradictory great man in human annals. He had the tongue of a scorpion and the vanity of a child. He could do almost everything, and he did nothing ill. He was jeweler, engraver, poet, musician, soldier, sculptor, writer and lover "and in all," somebody once added, "so truly admirable!" He at least succeeded to admiration in all the rôles, if that is to be admirable. He could make popes laugh and kings listen. He could direct the resistance to a storming party, as he did from the walls of St. Angelo, and he could fabricate ornamental dishes so exquisite in their decoration, and so ingenious in their equipment of secret springs which released unsuspected compartments and panels that they are the despair of modern artificers.

If he failed to excel in everything he did, he at least brought audacity, ingenuity, and a certain arresting quality, sometimes bizarre, to all he did.

Sword handles, dies, rings, medals, medallions, buttons, busts, heroic statues, plaques, crucifixes, ewers, coffers, candelabra—he attempted them all and in scores of instances he evolved the new, the wonderful, and the lovely.

To this day any one of his works gives distinction to the collection of any palace, any museum, so fortunate as to possess

it. It is so from the Escorial to Windsor castle, from the Palazzo Bargello in Florence to the remote and sequestered Skokloster far to the northwest of Stockholm. To that château in the forest men make a half day's sail to see the shield he is said to have fabricated for Charles V, and having seen it account themselves well rewarded even though the authenticity of the shield has never been completely established. But if it is not veritable Cellini it is worthy of him. In the Metropolitan Museum of New York they have given the center of a noble room to an authentic and resplendent specimen of his work, and it glistens there within a casket of crystal. In the Chicago Art Institute you may see on the first floor, to the left of the grand staircase as you face it, a copy of the wax model of his Perseus. It is only a copy—in plaster colored to represent bronze—but because it reproduces the first sketch for what ultimately became one of the wonder works of the world, it has a place of honor.

Now the glory of Cellini's book is of another glory than the glory of his triumphs in bronze and gold and gems, but the first is equal to the second. He gives you the whole man—all he devised, thought, suffered, all the splendors he wrought, all the evil he did. These nearly 500 octavo pages are the passionate self-revelation of a truculent man in his loves, brawls, intrigues, machinations, homicides, sieges, imprisonments, banishments, and journeys, in his fights at inns, in his visions in fever, and in supper parties with "the divine Michael Angelo." He knew papal chambers and kings' cabinets. He could talk at his ease with the emperor of half the world and joke sedately with Francis I. He tells you everything—from how he beat his doxy and model, Caterina, to how he severely admonished the Pope in the presence of his nobles. He is brave, shameless, amusing, sapient, and comprehensive. If there was any commandment he did not break it was not for lack of enterprise.

The spell of his book lies in its enormous and unflagging vivacity and vividness; in its joy in achievement and in existence. Better, says the world, a whole rogue than half a man. And so it takes Benvenuto to its heart, extenuates everything, chuckles over everything, because here was a puissant and blazing personality now

loftily, now wickedly, always sincerely in earnest about everything, be it a murder or a medallion.

John Addington Symonds made far and away the best English translation of Cellini's memoirs, and in his absorbing introduction to that translation he almost completely accepts Cellini at Cellini's own estimate of himself. In Symonds' opinion he was neither rogue nor charlatan and was, above all, truth-teller. Ordinary students are not wont to seek correctives to the opinions of so sympathetic and learned a student of the Renaissance as John Addington Symonds was. But in the matter of his acceptance of Cellini as preëminent artist in metals and gems such a corrective exists, and deserves attention. It is the valuable and copiously illustrated little monograph entitled "Benvenuto Cellini," which the thoroughly independent English art critic Robert H. Hobart Cust wrote in 1912 for Methuen's series, "Little Books on Art." From the closing pages of Mr. Cust's close-packed volume this passage is taken:

" . . . although in no branch of the plastic arts did he ever quite reach first-class eminence, he still succeeded in impressing his personality upon the history of Art with greater vividness than any of the other craftsmen of his day, and we naturally ask how and why this is so. The answer is simple enough. His really stupendous artistic achievement, though he himself would never have believed it, could he have foreseen it, is the celebrated 'Autobiography': a monument of perfectly spontaneous and unconscious art all the more astounding because of its very unconsciousness of artifice. Whilst the 'Perseus' leaves the spectator cold, the 'Nymph of Fontainebleau' appears attenuated and disproportioned, the famous 'Salt-Cellar' garish in color and faulty in construction, the 'Autobiography' goes straight home with the truth and sincerity of a veritable human document. It enchants the reader with the endless variety of its incident, it holds his attention and imagination spellbound with its headlong rush, until the dramatically abrupt ending leaves one positively gasping for breath. And a still higher compliment has fallen to the share of this renowned work, inasmuch as the celebrated Accademia della Crusca has considered it worthy of a place amongst those works of Italian writers which are held to be classical in their form, and to be resorted to for examples of words, of style, and of diction."

# VI

## JANE AUSTEN'S "PRIDE AND PREJUDICE"

(Written in 1796 but not published until 1813)

*EVERYBODY KNOWS THIS PASSAGE—*

*. . . Also read again, and for the third time at least, Miss Austen's very finely written novel of "Pride and Prejudice." That young lady had a talent for describing the involvements and feelings and characters of ordinary life which is to me the most wonderful I ever met with. The Big Bow-wow strain I can do myself like any now going; but the exquisite touch which renders ordinary, commonplace things and characters interesting, from the truth of the description and the sentiment, is denied to me. What a pity such a gifted creature died so early!*

(Journal, March 14, 1826.) SIR WALTER SCOTT.

*AND THIS—*

*Shakespeare has had neither equal nor second. But among the writers who, in the point which we have noticed [delicate yet definite discrimination of character, fineness of shading, absence of caricature], have approached nearest to the manner of the great master, we have no hesitation in placing Jane Austen.*

(Essay on Madame D'Arblay, 1843.) LORD MACAULAY.

*BUT FEW ARE FAMILIAR WITH THIS—*

*I am at a loss to understand why people hold Miss Austen's novels at so high a rate, which seem to me vulgar in tone, sterile in artistic invention, imprisoned in the wretched conventions of English society, without genius, wit, or knowledge of the world. Never was life so pinched and narrow. The one problem in the mind of the writer in both the stories I have read, "Persuasion" and "Pride and Prejudice," is marriageableness. All that interests in any character introduced is still this one, Has he or she the money to marry with, and conditions conforming? 'Tis "the nympholepsy of a fond despair," say, rather, of an English boarding house. Suicide is more respectable.*

(Journal, August, 1861.) RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

*OR THIS—*

*When I take up one of Jane Austen's books, such as "Pride and Prejudice," I feel like a barkeeper entering the kingdom of heaven. I know what his sensation would be and his private comments. He would not find the place to his taste, and he would probably say so.*

(Paine's "Mark Twain," Chapter CCLXXX.) MARK TWAIN.

*TO SAY NOTHING OF THIS—*

*What pleasure-giving elements do Miss Austen's novels now possess which they will not possess a century hence? None! If they please now, they will please then, unless in the meantime some catastrophe occurs to human nature, which shall rob the poor thing of the satisfaction she has always hitherto found in contemplating her own visage. Faiths, fashions, thrones, parliaments, late dinners, may all fade away; we may go forward, we may go back; recall political economy from Saturn; or Mr. Henry George from New York; crown Mr. Parnell King of Ireland, or hang him high as Haman; but fat Mary Bennet, the elder Miss Bates, Mr. Rushworth, and Mr. John Thorpe must always remain within call, being not accidental, but essential figures.*

("Life of Charlotte Brontë," Chapter XVI.) AUGUSTINE BIRRELL.

IN the literature of classic fiction there is not a book which it is more perilous to recommend, or safer to commend, than the tale—alike placid and mordant—called "Pride and Prejudice." A witty, quaintly fastidious, and altogether quizzical south-of-England girl of one and twenty years wrote it more than a century and a quarter ago, waited seventeen years to see it published, and, when it was published, would not permit her name to be placed on the title page.

Her habits and likings were domestic, her environment provincial—she was seldom away from home and never outside of England—and the spirit of her life was the spirit of modesty, piety, and gentle self-effacement. Her mother used to say of her and her older sister Cassandra Elizabeth—"If Cassandra were going to have her head cut off Jane would insist upon sharing her fate." As to her personal attributes, she lives in the annals of literary biography as "dear Jane Austen."

But to-day many a traveler makes the journey of seventy miles southward from London to view Winchester cathedral not because

it has the longest nave of any church in Europe save one but because there Jane Austen rests, beneath a tablet on which are carved words from "Proverbs":

"She openeth her mouth with wisdom; and in her tongue is the law of kindness."

No satirist—and Jane, though her touch was delicate, could be very scathing—ever left this world with a gentler recommendation to the next.

She died 110 years ago, at peace with a world which for twenty years—in print and out—she had so prettily quizzed and which she continues to quiz with a pertinence that reduces those eleven decades to a yesterday.

Her masterpiece, "Pride and Prejudice," is still a storm center; to some a discipline, to some a delight; to some their pleasure in it is a source of pride profound but harmless—that is why it is safe to commend the book—and in some the mere mention of it excites rebellion—and that is why it is no safe book to recommend. Try not the task. It has been known to cool friendships. "What is all this?" thy friend may say. "Five hundred tedious, thin spun pages on the ordinary affairs of commonplace persons. And five more books of the same! Go to! I have a life to live!"

So be it.

Aversion to or joy in Jane Austen is as much a manifestation of the individual's organism as his pulse beat.

"Do you like Jane Austen?" "No." That is one kind of mind. "Do *you* like Jane Austen?" "I do!" And that is another.

Mr. Howells always answered with a rapturous "Yes." Mr. Tarkington, who has written things worthy of Mr. Howells, and of Jane Austen, cannot endure Jane.

Nor should the risk of recommendation be run. Let not the burden and bother of well-meant propaganda repel men and women from Jane Austen, but let the pride of discovery lure them to her. I know not how that is to be effected. Perhaps by leaving the book about—with no other on the same table. I tried that once in my home with a volume of Jane's letters, and for the three

hours ensuing there came from the most judicious being I know no sound save occasional laughter—soft and relishing—and a semi-occasional "O, *do* listen to this!"

It was this:

" . . . Miss Blackford is agreeable enough. I do not want people to be very agreeable, as it saves me the trouble of liking them a great deal."

And this, read out on a sweltering August night:

"What dreadful hot weather we have! It keeps one in a continual state of inelegance."

And again:

"My mother continues hearty; her appetite and nights are very good, but she sometimes complains of an asthma, a dropsy, water in her chest, and a liver disorder."

Still again:

"I shall not write again for many days; perhaps a little repose may restore my regard for a pen."

I told you that Miss Austen was fastidious. She believed that all things could be done decorously:

"Letty is with Mary at present, of course exceedingly happy, and in raptures with the child. Mary does not manage matters in such a way as to make me want to lay in myself. She is not tidy enough in her appearance, she has no dressing gown to sit up in; her curtains are all too thin, and things are not in that comfort and style about her which are necessary to make such a situation an enviable one. Elizabeth was really a pretty object with her nice clean cap put on so tidily and her dress so uniformly white and orderly."

In some of her portraits Jane is shown in a cap, and there has been argument as to why she took to caps early in life. There need have been none, for, writing to Cassandra in December, 1798, when she was three and twenty, she says:

"I have made myself two or three caps to wear of evenings since I came home, and they save me a world of torment as to hairdressing, which at present gives me no trouble beyond washing and brushing, for my long hair is always plaited up out of sight, and my short

hair curls well enough to want no papering. I have had it cut lately by Mr. Butler."

And so the women love the Jane of the ninety-four letters. The Jane of the novels is quite as whimsical and intimate a chronicler as the Jane of letters.

But who shall convey to another the special charm of Jane Austen? It is too elusive and too leisurely for swift impartment, because much of it proceeds from and is dependent on the settings —and her settings are extensive and detailed. That charm must be absorbed. Often effects are produced in a line and come as the swift but soft culmination of many lines of leisurely filigree. Signal instances of this are three little *jabs* of type which have been selected to illustrate the pompous, meddling, overbearing dowager, Lady Catherine de Bourgh of "Pride and Prejudice." It is a characterization which deserves to rank in novelistic portraiture with Anthony Trollope's Mrs. Proudie, and, even as Anthony knew that Mrs. Proudie was good work, so Jane loved Lady Catherine with a craftsman's love and frankly proclaimed her good work.

These are the jabs:

"Whenever any of the cottagers were disposed to be quarrelsome, discontented, or too poor, she sallied forth into the village to settle their differences, silence their complaints, and scold them into harmony and plenty."

"Lady Catherine had many other questions to ask respecting their journey, and as she did not answer them all herself, attention was necessary."

"The party then gathered round the fire to hear Lady Catherine determine what weather they were to have on the morrow."

That is typical Jane Austen. Augustine Birrell said that when the true Janeite reads such typical lines "the smile of satisfaction, betraying the deep inward peace they never fail to beget, widens, like a circle in the water, as he remembers (and he is careful always to remember) how his dearest friend, who has been so successful in life, can no more read Miss Austen than he can the Moabitish stone."

Sometimes she tells a page in a line or two. Elizabeth and Jane Bennet (the heroines of "Pride and Prejudice") are discussing the austere, high-minded, misunderstood Darcy, who repels people, and the plausible, superficially winning but essentially false Wickham, and Jane remarks:

"There certainly was some great mismanagement in the education of those two young men. One has got all the goodness, and the other all the appearance of it."

And Elizabeth on Darcy:

"The general prejudice against Mr. Darcy is so violent that it would be the death of half the good people in Meryton to attempt to place him in an amiable light. I am not equal to it."

Elizabeth confesses that she, like the rest, has been too ready to dislike Darcy:

"I meant to be uncommonly clever in taking so decided a dislike to him, without any reason. It is such a spur to one's genius, such an opening for wit, to have a dislike of that kind. One may be continually abusive without saying anything just; but one cannot always be laughing at a man without now and then stumbling on something witty."

Jane Bennet is the equable, trustful, extenuating sister; Elizabeth is keen-eyed, rather aloof, and, like her creator, fastidious and witty. Jane, trying to excuse a swain who seems faithless, says:

"Women fancy admiration means more than it does."
ELIZABETH—"And men take care that they should."

In two lines, the Roentgen rays search out two natures.

Mrs. Gardiner, also discussing the seemingly faithless Bingley, asks:

"Pray, how violent was Mr. Bingley's love?"

The question evokes this treasure—worthy of Goldsmith at his best:

ELIZABETH—"I never saw a more promising inclination; he was growing quite inattentive to other people. . . . At his own ball he

offended two or three young ladies by not asking them to dance and I spoke to him twice myself without receiving an answer. Could there be finer symptoms? Is not general incivility the very essence of love?"

Mr. Howells, a perfect Janeite, once said ("Heroines of Fiction") that Mrs. Bennet "is probably the most entire and perfect simpleton ever drawn in fiction," and concerning that lady, with her steady flow of lamentation about the entail and her nerves, I shall remember and treasure till I die these nine marble-hewn words:

*"Mrs. Bennet was restored to her usual querulous serenity."*

And can you forget this about Lady Lucas, bored at the party by Mrs. Bennet's vaingloriousness:

"And Lady Lucas, who had been long yawning at the repetition of delights which she saw no likelihood of sharing was left to the comforts of cold ham and chicken."

To this, illustrating Mr. Bennet's suave cynicism in managing a woman who would have driven most men to distraction, you must attend:

"My dear, I have two small favors to request. First, that you will allow me the free use of my understanding on the present occasion; and, secondly, of my room. I shall be glad to have the library to myself as soon as may be."

The touch is all.

Whether you do or do not surrender to Jane Austen, the battle of the Janeites and the non-Janeites remains curious and fascinating. The masters, as emphatically as we laymen, have disagreed about the shrewd, observant, slightly feline Jane.

George IV admired her—it is one of the two good things (I forget the other) that I ever read about that regal cad—and when he was prince regent he directed Mr. Clarke, his librarian, to place a copy of "Pride and Prejudice" in every one of the residences which were kept in readiness for him.

He also intimated that Miss Austen might dedicate her next book to him, and, I am sorry to say, she did it. You may read the slavish words on the second page of "Emma":

TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
THE PRINCE REGENT
THIS WORK IS
BY HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS'S PERMISSION
MOST RESPECTFULLY DEDICATED
BY HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS'S
DUTIFUL AND OBEDIENT HUMBLE SERVANT
THE AUTHOR

Benjamin Disraeli (Lord Beaconsfield) read "Pride and Prejudice" seventeen times, he said, but he was a robust yarner, and Sir Walter Scott read it thrice. "Emma" and "Northanger Abbey" were his favorites and he often read chapters of them to his evening circle. "Smoked my cigar with Lockhart after dinner," he wrote in his journal under date of September 18, 1827, "and then whiled away the evening over one of Miss Austen's novels. There is a truth of painting in her writings which always delights me."

That was written ten years after Miss Austen's death.

George Eliot pronounced her "the greatest artist that has ever written," using the term "artist," she said, "to signify the most perfect master over the means to her end." But Charlotte Brontë said that she was "only shrewd and observant . . . more real than true, but she cannot be great." Tennyson read and reread her and, like Macaulay, named her with Shakespeare. So did Goldwin Smith. But Longfellow's admiration was carefully qualified. Sainte-Beuve uttered a lordly phrase about her: He proclaimed her "new and ancient, easily contemporaneous with every age," but so keen a satirist as W. S. Gilbert admitted "an unexplained dislike for her." Miss Mitford told a niece of Jane's that she "would give a hand" if she could write like Jane, but Mark Twain said that "any library that does not contain a set of Jane Austen is a good library."

So I call her "the sweetheart of literature," adored by many, only piquing and plaguing others.

There is a story of an old verger of Winchester cathedral who stopped a pilgrim to the grave with the faltering question, "What was there *particular,* sir, about Miss Austen that so many people should want to see her grave?"

Well, verger, for one thing—

SHE WROTE HONESTLY.

# VII

## KEATS' "THE EVE OF ST. AGNES"

(Composed during the winter of 1819)

*What a man gives, be he poet, beggar or king, is always himself; and the fascinating thing about Keats' imperishable gift is the torch-like beauty of that glorious spirit which went flaming through the cluttered world for a few brief years, leaving a cleared path for men's souls to walk in. He saw straight and true in a perplexed and distracted age—*

*"Beauty is truth, truth beauty—that is all*
*Ye know on earth, and all ye need to know."*

HARRIET MONROE.

If I were beginning my first adult reading of Keats I would begin as I began when a boy. I would not ask him, or his words, or myself, many questions. I would try neither to read "conscientiously" nor to learn much about my author before reading him. I would be content to bask in beauty, and for a time be rather inactive and incurious about the John Keats not before me on his page.

Beauty alone is the justification of much of the poetry of Keats. It is ample.

(For the justification of beauty is the joy it imparts, and the justification of joy is that it expands and exalts the soul.) Joy is not selfish. It is the parent of gratitude, of that sense of obligation imposed by our consciousness of a beautiful world around us and of beautiful words of poets and prophets in our ears.

It is so with the spiritual and moral emphasis of the poetry of John Keats. That emphasis is brought to bear through the purely æsthetic medium.

Nor is its miraculous beauty to be possessed by routine conquest. It pervades the mind with a varied and melodious insistence, and so pervading, it persuades and conquers. Its is the victory, but —ah, miracle of poetry!—we are the gainers.

In many years of reading, the lines of English verse that laid the most instant spell of wonder and awe upon me were the lines with which Keats' "Hyperion" begins:

"Deep in the shady sadness of a vale
Far sunken from the healthy breath of morn,
Far from the fiery noon, and eve's one star,
Sat gray-hair'd Saturn, quiet as a stone,
Still as the silence round about his lair;
Forest on forest hung about his head
Like cloud on cloud. No stir of air was there,
Not so much life as on a summer's day
Robs not one light seed from the feather'd grass,
But where the dead leaf fell, there did it rest.
A stream went voiceless by, still deadened more
By reason of his fallen divinity
Spreading a shade: the Naiad 'mid her reeds
Press'd her cold finger closer to her lips."

A boy, of course, did not know that that was great art. He did not conquer the poet—did not—if he read far into "Hyperion"—understand a tenth part of the poet. But the poet conquered him, and that was the essential matter. The boy did not know that there was a stroke of genius in almost every one of the fourteen lines. He did not know that "shady sadness" and "eve's one star" and the stream that "went voiceless by" were feats of description which for vividness coupled with compactness are almost without parallel in English poetry. He did not know that in the totality of its effect this picture of fallen majesty, of remoteness, of desolation, constitutes a marvelous assembling of 116 words. The boy was just bewitched. That was all, but for him it was memorable.

The imagery of the lines did not evade him. He could feel their veracity, for had he not seen and felt on his own countryside hot, breathless summer days so strangely still that they in truth did not lift one winged seed from the tall and wizened stalks by the road? And how it mounts, he thought; how it mounts from the shady sadness of the sunken vale to the "forest on forest, like cloud on cloud," for he had been in stretches of woodland that so moved upward along rocky ledges away from the dank coolness beneath them toward "the fiery noon." And when he came to

the part about the Naiad who "press'd her cold finger to her lips," then he was strangely stirred, and wondered why. That he wondered was enough.

He turned a page, came to the lines where the poet is telling how a grieving goddess bent over dethroned Saturn and spoke to him "in solemn tenor and deep organ tone"—a tone that, so the poet told the boy, was like the tone he himself had often heard among the oaks of his countryside:

> " . . . when, upon a tranced summer-night,
> Those green-rob'd senators of mighty woods,
> Tall oaks, branch-charmed by the earnest stars,
> Dream, and so dream all night without a stir,
> Save from one gradual solitary gust
> Which comes upon the silence, and dies off,
> As if the ebbing air had but one wave."

As John Keats spoke to the boy, so I am content to let him speak to the man. The enchantment is the justification.

Years later, in reading letters and certain critical observations by John Keats, the boy came upon passages where Keats throws out vivid suggestions on the justification inherent in beauty and in poetry. They have the stimulating value of epigram:

"I have not the slightest feel of humility toward the public, or to anything in existence but the Eternal Being, the Principle of Beauty, and the Memory of great Men."

"I find I cannot exist without Poetry—without eternal Poetry—half the day will not do—the whole of it—I began with a little, but habit has made me a Leviathan."

"I felt rather lonely this Morning at breakfast so I went and unbox'd a Shakespeare—'There's my Comfort.' "

"I have a horrid Morbidity of Temperament . . . [but] I never quite despair and I read Shakespeare—indeed I shall I think never read any other Book much. I am very near agreeing with Hazlitt that Shakespeare is enough for us."

"Hyperion" has not been selected as the lure-poem to draw young readers toward Keats, partly because, though long, it is a fragment and partly because in places it is involved and presupposes a good deal of knowledge of Greek mythology. Selected,

rather, is Keats' metrical tale, "The Eve of St. Agnes," which is thoroughly representative of his witchery in words and which though brief—"a little poem called 'St. Agnes' Eve,'" was the way he casually described it in a letter to his brother George—is an entity every line in which tells. (He wrote it in the winter of 1819, the most part in the south of England, and finished it in the environs of London.) "A little poem." Just short of a hundred years later Sir Sidney Colvin wrote in his Life of Keats, ("For its author merely 'a little poem,' for us a masterpiece aglow in every line with the vital quintessence of romance.") It comprises forty-two stanzas of nine lines each—the goodly old stanza which Spenser devised and which to this day bears his name. The number of words is not more than a score or so above 3,000.

The story unfolded by "The Eve of St. Agnes" is neither important nor intricate. The significance of its ethics, if it possesses any, is slight. Here again the enchantment is the justification. For what is that story? . . . A bitter night in winter—the eve of the day of St. Agnes, which Catholics observe on the 21st of January. On the eve of that day, if maids perform certain fond ceremonies, they may in the night behold as in a vision their future husbands. On a St. Agnes eve in the time of long ago the maid Madeline does so dream, and wakes to find her vision a reality. Above her bends her lover, Porphyro, with whose house hers is in deadly feud. They elope:

> "They glide, like phantoms, into the wide hall!
> Like phantoms to the iron porch they glide.
> . . . . . .
> And they are gone: ay, ages long ago
> These lovers fled away into the storm."

Now that, in the essentials of the tale, is all. Is aught so parched as the seed of ancient legend? But behold how Keats in the first stanza of his retelling of this legend touches the seed to flowering beauty:

> "St. Agnes' Eve—ah, bitter chill it was!
> The owl, for all his feathers, was a-cold;
> The hare limp'd trembling through the frozen grass,
> And silent was the flock in woolly fold:

Numb were the Beadsman's fingers, while he told
His rosary, and while his frosted breath,
Like pious incense from a censer old,
Seem'd taking flight for heaven without a death,
Past the sweet Virgin's picture, while his prayers he saith."

That is the first of the forty-two stanzas. You can see that the setting is to be all. Emerson said of poetry, "Itself must be its own end or it is nothing," and Emerson not only laboriously copied into his journal the "tranced summer night" passage about the oaks which we were talking of but he also copied and, as his son tells us in the notes to the published journal, "loved to repeat," certain lines of the third stanza of "The Eve of St. Agnes." But first we must have the second:

"His prayer he saith, this patient, holy man;
Then takes his lamp, and riseth from his knees,
And back returneth, meager, barefoot, wan,
Along the chapel aisle by slow degrees:
The sculptur'd dead, on each side seem to freeze,
Emprison'd in black, purgatorial rails:
Knights, ladies, praying in dumb orat'ries,
He passeth by; and his weak spirit fails
To think how they may ache in icy hoods and mails."

Then the lines and music which Emerson especially loved and would murmur to himself:

"Northward he turneth through a little door,
And scarce three steps, ere Music's golden tongue
Flatter'd to tears this aged man and poor.

"This 'flatter'd' is exquisite," wrote gentle Leigh Hunt, who was the first to recognize Keats' genius, adding, "In this word 'flatter'd' is the whole theory of the secret of tears; which are the tributes, more or less worthy, of self-pity to self-love." The stanza by stanza commentary on the poem from which that bit is taken was printed by Hunt in one of his several periodical ventures called the London *Journal,* and he began it with this charming jeu d'esprit:

"The reader should give us three pearls, instead of three half-pence, for this number of our Journal, for it presents him with the *whole* of Mr. Keats' beautiful poem, entitled as above—to say nothing of our loving commentary."

From the icy chapel, where the sculptur'd dead seem to freeze within "black, purgatorial rails," the vivid, harmonious stanzas move through revelry and banquet toward—

"The maiden's chamber, silken, hush'd and chaste;"

and toward—

" . . . Madeline asleep in lap of legends old,
. . . . . .
While legion'd fairies paced the coverlet
And pale enchantment held her sleepy-eyed."

Before she sleeps she kneels to pray, the concealed lover watching her. High in her chamber is a casement triple-arched and "diamonded with panes of quaint device, innumerable of stains and splendid dyes," and:

"Full on this casement shone the wintry moon,
And threw warm gules on Madeline's fair breast,
As down she knelt for heaven's grace and boon;
Rose-bloom fell on her hands, together prest,
And on her silver cross soft amethyst,
And on her hair a glory, like a saint:
She seem'd a splendid angel, newly drest,
Save wings, for heaven:—Porphyro grew faint:
She knelt, so pure a thing, so free from mortal taint."

Then the dream, the awakening to reality, the exchange of vows, the flight, the finale:

"And they are gone: ay, ages long ago
These lovers fled away into the storm."

I discover no lesson. There is a hint, in the feud motif, of "Romeo and Juliet"; there is a hint of Peeping Tom in the episode of the concealment. The theme could have been grossly vulgarized. Keats, it is believed, took some of the bare bones of the legend from a tale of Boccaccio called "Il Filocolo," and that tale is gross. But Keats—at the age of twenty-three!—converted it into what is, in one of Hunt's happy turns of phrase about Keats' poetry, "a garden of enchantment." (Hunt, in another of his

felicities, said that Keats "never beheld an oak-tree without seeing the Dryad.")

Once I worried about the absence of moral significance—of lesson—in a poem so celebrated and so bepraised as "The Eve of St. Agnes." At last I worked it out for myself that here was proof, probably the nineteenth century's most decisive proof, of what the English language is capable in melody, in color, in cadence, and that *there* was my lesson—to revere the language capable of such harmonies, to respect its dignity, to use it choicely if I could, and to study piously the masterpieces of it. For thus is the ear attuned to what is high and fine and with it the soul at last.

## VIII

## LORD CHESTERFIELD'S "LETTERS TO HIS SON"

(First published in 1774, a year after the earl's death)

### *SOME OF LORD CHESTERFIELD'S BEST*

(These are all from the "Letters to His Son," 1739-1768.)

*Dispatch is the soul of business.*

*Whatever is worth doing at all is worth doing well.*

*Never put off till to-morrow what you can do to-day.*

*Courts and camps are the only places to learn the world in.*

*A gentleman is often seen, but very seldom heard, to laugh.*

*Be wiser than other people if you can, but do not tell them so.*

*Of all the troubles, do not decline, as many people do, that of thinking.*

*Whatever pleases you most in others will infallibly please others in you.*

*Advice is seldom welcome; and those who want it the most, always like it the least.*

*Those whom you can make like themselves better, will, I promise you, like you very well.*

*Every woman is infallibly to be gained by every sort of flattery; and every man by one sort or another.*

*Besides being civil, which is absolutely necessary, the perfection of good breeding is to be civil with ease.*

*Knowledge may give weight, but accomplishments only give lustre; and many more people see than weigh.*

*An injury is much sooner forgotten than an insult.* [The earl used this in the letters to both son and adopted son.]

*Most arts require long study and application; but the most useful art of all, that of pleasing, requires only the desire.*

*Whoever is in a hurry shows that the thing he is about is too big for him. Haste and hurry are very different things.*

*Without care and method the largest fortune will not, and with them almost the smallest will, supply all necessary expenses.*

*Keep an account, in a book, of all that you receive and of all that you pay; for no man, who knows what he receives and what he pays, ever runs out.*

*Do not tell all, but do not tell a lie. The greatest fools are the greatest liars. For my part, I judge the truth of a man by the extent of his intellect.*

*Take care of your health as much as you can; for* TO BE, *or* NOT TO BE, *is a question of much less importance, in my mind, than to be, or not to be, well.*

*Never read history without having maps, and a chronological book, or tables, lying by you, and constantly referred to; without which history is only a confused heap of facts.*

*Company is a republic too jealous of its liberties to suffer a dictator even for a quarter of an hour; and yet in that, as in all republics, there are some who really govern, but then it is by seeming to disclaim, instead of attempting to usurp, the power.*

*Remember to take the best dancing master at Berlin, more to teach you to sit, stand, and walk gracefully, than to dance finely. The Graces, the Graces; remember the Graces! Adieu.*

THIS is one of the most curious, diverting, instructive and contradictory of books. It is cynical and fond, generous and mean, urbane and biting, independent and fawning. A stranger combination of right feeling and calculated deviousness never proceeded from the pen of man. It contains passages that in their sweet reasonableness would not be unworthy of Marcus Aurelius, and it contains passages that would instruct Machiavelli in the arts of duplicity. It now inculcates a gentle, genial consideration for others and now teaches the wiles by which the most may be gotten out of others. It is based on fastidiousness so exquisite as to amount to no contemptible kind of religion, and on self-interest so persistent and so ruthless that it is almost villainy.

It represents twenty-nine years of patient, affectionate and generous devotion on the part of a busy statesman and diplomat to his illegitimate son, and it defines and recommends principles of conduct which, had that son been a more receptive pupil,

would have made him a truckler and a fawner. For a century and a half it has been steadily read and vigorously denounced and praised. It remains to this day—in its unabridged form—both the most profitable and the most perilous book that a father who would have his boy make a pleasing figure in the world can put into his hands.

But antithesis soon grows tedious. One more, however, may be permitted, for it is the most curious of them all: The fourth Earl of Chesterfield's "Letters to His Son" was never intended for publication by the writer of the letters, but by the generality of readers the brilliant man and skillful administrator who wrote them is remembered for the letters alone. Their publication was accomplished a year after his death through an act of singular meanness on the part of the widow of the son to whom they were written. At that act the old earl, whose opinion of the probity of humankind was as light as his devotion to his son and his kindness to the widow were sincere, would have smiled his tolerant, weary, cynical smile. He would not have railed. Railing was ungentlemanlike.

It is not desirable to make these brief sketches a retelling of facts which can be obtained in any book of reference, but the "Letters" are so celebrated and the exact facts relative to their composition are so vaguely remembered by most persons that a few lines of data may be useful.

In 1727 George I dies, and one of the early acts of George II is to entrust the English embassy at The Hague to Philip Dormer Stanhope, who, in 1726, at the age of thirty-two, had succeeded to the earldom of Chesterfield. The tremulous state of continental politics makes the post at The Hague delicate and important. In it the young earl is brilliantly successful. Tact, suavity, skill, and a keen comprehension of and solicitude for the interests of his country, coupled with a courtly mindfulness of the claims and susceptibilities of other countries, distinguish all his negotiations.

In 1731 the ambassador meets and seduces a young Frenchwoman of gentle birth named Elisabeth du Bouchet, who is governess (dame de compagnie, they called her then) to the

pretty orphan daughters of a rich Dutch merchant. Of that liaison comes Philip Stanhope (born 1732), who is to grow up a harmless, well-meaning mediocrity, to die at the age of thirty-six without having done one memorable thing in the world but who will, as long as the most fascinating specimen of the literature of manners in our language survives, be memorable as the person to whom Chesterfield's "Letters to His Son" were written.

Those letters in the form we now have them, began when the boy was seven years old. They continued until within thirty days of his death. He died at Avignon of dropsy in 1768—five years before his courtly old father, who, within half an hour of his own death, whispered to a servant, "Give Dayrolles a chair" when his old friend entered the sick room, died in London. "Give Dayrolles a chair" were the last words he was heard to utter. They have become classic; justly so, for they tell the whole story. The nobleman whose name is a synonym for suave and correct deportment was suave and correct to the end.

Now comes the ironic part of the story. It is the part which gives to the "Letters" a poignancy of which many a young reader of the unannotated issues of the book—and it has appeared in all kinds of catch-penny forms as well as in the most sumptuous—remains uninformed. For Philip Stanhope did to his father a thing perhaps as unfeeling and unfilial—aside from an act of violence or of fraud—as a child can inflict upon a generous and solicitous parent: He married secretly and never informed the earl of the fact. He ignored, for no reason that any of the numerous annalists of the Stanhope family has been able to discover, the right which a family has to take an interest in the relationship which is to perpetuate that family. He deprived a father who never had deprived him of a rational pleasure of the pleasure of sharing in those gracious festivities which attend a wedding and which are so joyous and so solemn. In short, he acted like a cad.

In one department alone of his father's schoolings had he proved an apt pupil. In secretiveness he had been expert—but it was stupid and unfeeling secretiveness. Weeks after the burial of dull Philip Stanhope, whom men had called "a commonplace bookworm" and who had sat down abashed and affrighted in the midst

of his first—and last—speech in Parliament, came a letter from Avignon. It was from the son's widow. It informed the earl of the marriage, together with the fact that of the union two sons had been born. The potentialities of a vulgar family row in those tidings will be obvious to the most inexperienced in family affairs. No row developed; instead, one of the sweetest and most commendable episodes in the annals of great houses.

If ever in his long, often devious and sometimes doubtful career the earl was decisively to show himself a gallant gentleman and loyal kinsman, it was now. The childless old man—he had no children by his marriage to Melusina, Countess of Walsingham, the illegitimate daughter of George I by that gaunt Von Schulenberg whom ribald courtiers called "the Maypole" and whom the king made Duchess of Kendal—the childless old man took the widow and her boys to his heart. His letters to the lads are fond and jolly; his letters to the mother practical and polite. A few lines from one of the early ones show how a gentleman acted in a situation that must have exasperated him to the soul:

"The last time I had the pleasure of seeing you, I was so taken up in playing with the boys, that I forgot the more important affairs. How soon would you have them placed at school? When I know your pleasure as to that, I will send to Monsieur Perny, to prepare everything for their reception. In the meantime, I beg that you will equip them thoroughly with clothes, linen, etc., all good, but plain; and give me the amount [in some texts the word is 'account'], which I will pay; for I do not intend, from this time forward, the two boys should cost you one shilling."

Always Lord Chesterfield was like that in the crises that try men's manners. His morals may have left much to be desired—they were the morals of the world of fashion and of politics in his age—but his manners did not warp under the test of weather. Leave use of the title "his Lordship" to those who like the using of it, but no man who likes pleasant people will begrudge the fourth Earl of Chesterfield the title of "his Exquisiteness." He said the most irresistible things. When he grew old he became very deaf, but he turned reference to an affliction which makes

most men peculiarly morose into a compliment to those around him. For he said:

"It is very sad to be deaf, when one would so much enjoy listening."

Witty always, he also was whimsically witty, and that is the touch by which the suave man of wit keeps his wit from becoming oppression. A short time before he died he was paid a visit of respect by a French gentleman (Mons. Suard) who had said he was eager to see "l'homme le plus amiable, le plus poli, et le plus spirituel des trois royaumes." Even at his extreme age, Lord Chesterfield still was taking his daily drive in London, and the hour for the drive was approaching at the time of the call. The Frenchman says he shortened his visit, remarking to the earl that he did so lest he should fatigue him. The gallant courtier replied, "I do not detain you, for I must go and rehearse my funeral." The double play on "rehearse" is beyond praise.

In politics, when it was politics that made him genuinely responsible for the well-being of the people, he brought the same finesse to bear that he brought to bear in the family and in the drawing room. His brief administration as lord lieutenant of Ireland is a signal instance. The times were troubled throughout the kingdom—it was the period of the Young Pretender's attempt in '45—and the informer and the busybody, as always in Ireland, were ubiquitous. One of them, one morning when the earl was sipping his chocolate, brought him assurances that "they were rising in Connaught." The viceroy looked at his watch and replied briskly: "Well, it is 9 o'clock, and certainly time for them to rise." The words flew through the streets of Dublin and out over the troubled land and helped the Irish to laugh themselves into a peace and quiet seldom disturbed during his year among them.

Another time another Protestant busybody warned him that one of the Castle coachmen was a Roman Catholic who secretly went to mass. "Does he so?" said the viceroy—"well, I will take care that he shall never drive me there."

Nor did his success in the most difficult administrative post with which an Englishman could be entrusted have its origin in tact and

pleasantries alone. He opened schools, encouraged manufacturing, curbed jobbery, and made a humane interpretation of inhuman laws, still dropping, however, amid exacting affairs, the pretty speeches. The celebrated beauty, Miss Ambrose, he much admired, and he remarked with an expression of mock terror that she was "the only dangerous papist" he had met in Ireland.

So he went his laughing, successful way and the land was happy for a little while. When he left it the people followed him to the ship's side with cries of "God bless your Excellency and come back to us soon!"

Back he never came, but to this day his name is kindly spoken by the children of the age-long sorrows and his personality recalled with a fond smile.

# IX

## THUCYDIDES' "HISTORY OF THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR"

### (Composed between the years 421 and 401 B.C.)

*Thucydides' books and manuscripts were living men.*
JAMES FORD RHODES.

Is Thucydides' book alive to-day? Does it speak to us in the terms and of the problems of our time? He said it would be "κτῆμά ἐς ἀεὶ," a possession for all time. Was he right?

Read: Decide:

"We are the only people who think him that does not take part in public affairs to be not merely lazy but good for nothing.

"Those, undoubtedly, must be considered to be the bravest who, having the most acute perception of the sufferings of war and the sweets of peace, are yet not in the least prevented from facing danger.

"The duller part of mankind, in general, hold the reins of government with a steadier hand than your men of wit and vivacity. The latter are anxious to appear wiser than the laws. . . . The former, who have no confidence in their own abilities, are quite willing to confess that they are not above the laws of their country, though they are unable to cope with specious statements of the showy orators. Therefore they are abler administrators of public affairs because they are good judges of what is equitable, though they are inferior in debate.

"Accumulated wealth is a far surer support of war than forced contributions from unwilling citizens. The poor, who make their living by the sweat of their brow, are more willing to give the services of their body in defense of their country than to contribute from their narrow means. The former, though at some risk, they think may survive the crisis; while the latter, they are certain, will be gone forever: especially if the war should be protracted beyond expectations—a very likely event.

"The noblest sight and surest defense for a large army is to observe strict discipline and undeviating obedience to officers.

"Confession of poverty is a disgrace to no man; to make no effort to escape from it is indeed disgraceful.

"Power is more firmly secured by treating our equals with justice than if, elated by present prosperity, we attempt to enlarge it at every risk.

"Success in war depends not so much on arms as on money, by means of which arms are rendered serviceable; and more particularly so when a military power is fighting with a naval.

"In council, we consult amid the utmost security; in execution, we fail from being surrounded with dangers.

"It is the usual result of a sudden and unexpected gleam of prosperity on a people that it makes them vainglorious and arrogant. Good fortune attained as a consequence of judicious measures is more likely to last than what bursts upon us at once. And, to conclude, men are much more dexterous in warding off adversity than in preserving prosperity.

"So remarkably perverse is the nature of man that he despises whoever courts him and admires whoever will not bend before him.

"Men are foolish enough in their desire for vengeance to make precedent against themselves by infringing those laws which are the common protection of mankind and from which alone they can expect aid if they fall into difficulties.

"The virtue of men in office is, briefly, this: to do their country as much good as they can, or in any case no harm that they can avoid.

"He who is badly off has his misfortunes all to himself.

"To departed merit no one refuses the tribute of admiration, . . . for the envy of competition ceases only with the death of its object; whereas the merit which obstructs no one is honored with a zeal unmixed with jealous rivalry.

"Where the rewards of virtue are the most liberal, there will ever be found the best citizens.

"It is more disgraceful for men in high office to improve their private fortune by specious fraud than by open violence. Might makes right in the one case, while in the other man throws over his proceedings the cloak of despicable cunning.

"It is a maxim allowed, that no state can possibly preserve itself free unless it be a match for neighboring powers.

"Those are men to maintain themselves with credit in the world who never suffer their equals to insult them, who show proper respect to their superiors, and act with thoughtful kindness to their inferiors.

"A multitude of generals and many counsellors are very injurious.

". . . It is only the love of honor that never grows old; and honor it is, not gain, as some would have it, that rejoices the heart of age and helplessness.

"Never can a fair or just policy be expected of the citizen who does not, like his fellows, bring to the decision the interests and apprehensions of a father.

[To the women]: "Great will be your glory in not falling short of your natural character; and greatest will be hers who is least talked of among the men, whether for good or for bad."

Such are some of the nuggets embedded in this little great book. There are a thousand more. Gold alone, ran the old saying—now no longer true—gold alone does not tarnish. And so it is with the book of Thucydides, the first history of its kind; the first to examine and define the springs and motives of political action and to search out the heart of man as citizen. The passing of three and twenty centuries has neither tarnished nor invalidated it. It remains pure gold—when it is not shining marble. Not only was the "History of the Peloponnesian War" the first book of its kind in point of time; it is still the first in point of merit. Time itself seems to stand abashed before it, and minimizes it not. It was the model of the ancients, and they never surpassed it, not even Tacitus.

A century and three-quarters ago it was the delight of the poet Gray, himself most pure of stylists. "The retreat from Syracuse," he exclaimed to his friend Wharton—"is it or is it not the finest thing you ever read in your life?" The author of the "Elegy" referred to the narrative unfolded in Book VII of Thucydides.

In Victorian days, when Macaulay was marshaling the seventeen years of James II and William III into a pageant almost incomparable, he kept Thucydides' book by him for inspiration and example, albeit he sometimes had to acknowledge that by its very perfection it made faint his heart.

"This day," he wrote in his diary under date of February 27,

1835, "I finished Thucydides [Macaulay, the young reader should be reminded, did not mean finished for the first time, for the book had been an item in his regular reading in Greek for twenty years] after reading him with inexpressible interest and admiration. He is the greatest historian that ever lived."

Fifteen months later he wrote under those words:

"I am still of the same mind."

Book VII captivated him as it had Gray, and he said:

"There is no prose composition in the world which I place so high as the seventh book of Thucydides. It is the ne plus ultra of human art."

But Macaulay was no slavish worshiper, for once he said of his model, "But his dry parts are dreadfully dry." That is true. The compactness of Thucydides held dangers which he did not always overcome.

In our day, James Ford Rhodes related—for the chastening of their souls—to a distinguished assemblage of his fellow historians the story of how Macaulay "in a moment of despair, when he made a comparison between his manuscript and the work of Thucydides, thought of throwing his manuscript into the fire." Then the historian of our country, echoing the despair of the historian of England, said to his colleagues that the Athenian "digested his material and compressed his narrative, without taking the life out of the story, in a manner to make us despair."

Nor is he the despair of pundits alone. Consider the men who hurry from street to street, from man to man, from city to city, collecting the information that goes into newspapers. They must be expeditious, compact, and as exact as the feverish, flitting nature of their task will permit. Well, I never examined with any of them a certain half dozen pages in Book II of Thucydides but that we did not all agree that he made us despair, too. Those pages contain his narrative of the plague which swept Athens in the second year of a war that was to last seven and twenty years—how it destroyed and how it demoralized men, how the physicians were helpless to give help, how supplications and divinations alike were in vain, how it first manifested itself and how it ran its

course, how the maddened population vainly sought any relief, how the eyes were blinded and the memory destroyed, how birds and beasts of prey either abstained from touching the dead, or, touching them, themselves died; how despair instantly took from many men the power of resistance, how others "died like sheep" from nursing each other, how still others threw fear of gods and law of man to the winds and "now coolly ventured on what they had formerly done in a corner," and how "death was raging within the city and devastation without."

There it stands, austere, unforced, exact, actual—so actual that, as you read, you say, "These might have been my kinsmen or yours!"—a living picture of woe, squalor, disease, of causes and effects, of mental anguish and spiritual decay, and yet not one note of sensationalism for sensation's sake in it. A picture, in the fine phrase of Euripides ("Ion"), of "a city full of terror." And this is its supreme marvel: You could keep all of it within two columns of an American newspaper. In the English of Crawley it makes 1,776 words. In the Greek it is fewer.

And the funeral oration of Pericles!

Those nine pages a man ought to read, uncovered and standing, every Memorial Day as long as he lives—ought to read them by himself, but aloud, slowly, humbly, as he would read a book of devotion. I think of those nuggets of political wisdom in Thucydides as pure gold, but of the funeral oration of Pericles as white marble. "Of Pericles," men say, but, like most of the speeches in the book, it is, as to form, more of Thucydides than of the uttering speaker.

Nearly a fourth of the book is speeches, and, as Thucydides was in exile during twenty of the twenty-seven years of the Peloponnesian war, he had to take the speeches, many and notable, for the Hellenes were a fluent, disputatious people—at second hand. He obtained outlines and substance, then filled in and expanded.

Making no concealment of his method, he said:

"As to the speeches which were made either before or during the war, it was hard for me, and for others who reported them to me, to recollect the exact words. I have therefore put into the mouth of

each speaker the sentiments proper to the occasion, expressed as I thought he would be likely to express them, while at the same time I endeavored, as nearly as I could, to give the general purport of what was actually said."

With almost any other historian that method would have made the book a mockery. But Thucydides' knowledge of men and measures, his sixth sense of "what must have happened," enabled him to achieve firmer authenticity than if he had sat through parleys and memorial meetings with a stenographer at his side. His is the authenticity not of routine proceedings but of the spirit, of an age and of races.

So, if you will linger for a few seconds on the words that were spoken toward the close of the most eloquent memorial meeting in the recorded annals of mankind until the November day 2,293 years later when Lincoln spoke at Gettysburg, you shall hear coming to you across centuries and seas and plains the voice, grief-laden but proud, of Athens as she bent above her dead who had fallen in the war's first year, and hear, too, how she highly resolved to face the weary years before her:

"So died these men, as became Athenians. You, their survivors, must determine to have as unfaltering a resolution in the field, though you may pray that it may have a happier issue.

"And, not content with ideas, derived only from words, of the advantages which are bound up with the defense of your country, . . . you must yourselves realize the power of Athens and feed your eyes upon her from day to day until the love of her fills your hearts; and then, when all her greatness shall break upon you, you must reflect that it was by courage, sense of duty, and a keen feeling of honor in action that men were enabled to win all this, and that no personal failure in an enterprise could make them consent to deprive their country of their valor, but they laid it at her feet as the most glorious contribution that they could offer.

"For this offering of their lives, made in common by them all, they, each of them individually, received that renown which never grows old, and, for a sepulcher, not so much that in which their bones have been deposited, but that noblest of shrines wherein their glory is laid up to be eternally remembered upon every occasion on which deed or story shall call for its commemoration. For heroes have the whole earth for their tomb; and in lands far from their own, where the column with its epitaph declares it, there is enshrined in every breast

a record unwritten, with no tablet to preserve it except that of the heart.

"These take as your model, and, judging happiness to be the fruit of freedom, and freedom of valor, never decline the dangers of war. For it is not the miserable that would most justly be unsparing of their lives; these have nothing to hope for: it is rather they to whom continued life may bring reverses as yet unknown and to whom a fall, if it came, would be most tremendous in its consequences. And surely, to a man of spirit, the degradation of cowardice must be immeasurably more grievous than the unfelt death which strikes him in the midst of his strength and patriotism."

Of this treasure book—how small it is! you could get it all within the compass of a couple of current novels—of this book of description, of character-analysis, of tactics, of political instruction, of grim laconicisms, and of sentiment doubly affecting because it is restrained, I write from no remote or superstitious youthful remembrance. My several copies have been well collated, and the one I use most—Crawley's translation, because it is flexible and unforced—hath a thousand marks. Often I look into it, for it is not a book to be casually read and then dismissed, and the oftener I look the greater it becomes—and the reader humbler.

It is a book so wise, so farseeing, so concrete, so close to the business and bosom of civic man that it is an ageless book for communities, for nations, for individuals. The speculation is perhaps fanciful, but I truly believe that if every statesman and editor in Europe had thoroughly digested Thucydides there would have been no world war. For this little book deals with the supreme tragedy of a world war—a war that ultimately wrecked the finest civilization the race had up to that time evolved, a civilization which, as to many of its aspects, we to-day strive, and strive in vain, to re-create.

From the first Thucydides knew that the war would be long and he feared it would be ruinous. And when the pen was struck from his hand while he was writing Book VIII—there is a tradition that his daughter finished it—every apprehension he had entertained had become an actuality, and the words he wrote read like the tolling of bells:

" . . . They were beaten at all points and altogether; all that they suffered was great; they were destroyed, as the saying is, with a total destruction, their fleet, their army—everything was destroyed, and few out of many returned home."

"And few out of many returned home." It is the old—the old and yet the terribly new—story of puissant nations with all the world to bustle in but tearing each other asunder because of adjustable grievances that grew into implacable hatreds, because of tiny isles that each coveted for naval bases, because of the multitude's surrender to the high fantasticalities of designing and rapacious men, because of incitements and provocations and entangling alliances. And so hate stalked in the passes and rode the wave from the Thessalian hills to the far land of Sicily. The curtain fell on that tragedy, and Carthage and Rome began the identical play—and met the identical fate.

That is the lesson of this book—the lesson of the solemn repetitions of history. That is why it speaks so poignantly to thoughtful men now. What has happened shall happen unless not alone the choice and chosen citizens but all citizens shall be thoughtful citizens. And, if again it happens, again shall harbors be deserted and quays grass grown, and silence fall upon once busy ways. Again shall the artificer's hand be listless and the voice of wisdom be heard nor heeded any more. Those that strong men and women bred shall be as dust before many winds, and glooming above the people's desolation, alike for an epitaph and an accusation, one sentence shall tell again the old, recurring tale of their distraction and their doom:

*"They loved not one another."*

# X

## DUMAS PÈRE'S "THE THREE MUSKETEERS"

(First published in 1844)

*I have never hooted at the great spectacle of the drama of Life.*
ALEXANDRE DUMAS *père.*

*In all that he does, at his best, he has movement, kindness, courage, and gayety. His philosophy of life is that old philosophy of the sagas and of Homer. Let us enjoy the movement of the fray, the faces of fair women, the taste of good wine; let us welcome life like a mistress, let us welcome death like a friend, and with a jest—if death comes with honor. . . . That his works (his best works) should be even still more widely circulated than they are; that the young should read them, and learn frankness, kindness, generosity—should esteem the tender heart, and the gay, invincible wit; that the old should read them again and find forgetfulness of trouble, and taste the anodyne of dreams, that is what we desire.*
ANDREW LANG.

HERE is at once the least quotable and most readable of books. It is all action. We do not remember the words, but the deeds. We are swept along, not by the author, but by his people. They act themselves into our hearts or our hatreds. By action they define and portray themselves.

How the page invites!

Hundreds upon hundreds of the sentences each make a paragraph. Nearly every one of the more than 700 octavo pages is shot through and through with what newspaper compositors call "light." "Better let a little light into that column," they say, and thereby they wonderfully help dullness to get forward and by.

Papa Dumas has no time to waste nor will he waste yours. His business is to get on. Like Touchstone, he is swift and sententious. No books are less descriptive and discursive than his, yet no others so animate and enliven and make pictorial and vocal long stretches of history. When we take up "The Three

Musketeers" we have three busy years—1625 to 1628—ahead of us but Dumas is so tireless and compelling a narrator, driver rather, that we bustle and ride and fight through those years in a matter of a few days.

Thackeray made it a matter of hours, fighting with his womenfolk the while for possesion of the volumes, and then, in one of the "Roundabout Papers" he laid his card of thanks on Papa Dumas' table—thus:

"O Dumas! O thou brave, kind, gallant old Alexandre! I hereby offer thee homage, and give thee thanks for many pleasant hours. I have read thee (being sick in bed) for thirteen hours of a happy day, and had the ladies of the house fighting for the volumes. . . . Ah, Athos, Porthos, and Aramis, you are a magnificent trio."

How fast and how feverishly we live from the instant the curtain rises on the gorgeous fight before the inn at Meung—incessant sword play, whispers of intrigue, battles, sieges, amours, flight and pursuit, English Puritans snuffling their hymns, French theologues maundering in Latin (it is one of the great comedy scenes of the book and not unworthy of Molière), interviews with royalty, wild passings to and fro across the channel and not an instant to lose by land or sea between Paris and London or the queen's secret will be the cardinal's weapon. Executions, too, and incessant clatter of hoofs. In short, a tale

> . . . of most disastrous chances,
> Of moving accidents by flood and field,
> Of hairbreadth 'scapes i' the imminent deadly breach,
> Of being taken by the insolent foe.

I count three cracking fights in the first six chapters (sixty-eight pages) of "The Three Musketeers" and they not brawls merely, but epic stuff, with the destiny of heroes flashing in them.

Amid such turmoil, such peril, such diabolical interplay and crossplay of wits as make these pages gallop has Alexandre the Great any time to make himself quotable like a book? Nay, he must be making himself thrilling, like life. If he flings you some apothegm or some admonition, if, as his turbulent pageantry of life rushes by, he says of some engaging aspect of human character, "Note that!" he says it in the manner of a sagacious

fellow passenger on the swaying top of a coach. He is great at such things, uttering them with a kind of stately roguishness, as when d'Artagnan, having been robbed of his money and his precious letter at Meung, cries out that the money is nothing—"that letter is everything. I would rather lose a thousand pistoles than to have lost it."

Dumas' nudge in your side at this moment is worth much money:

"He would not have risked more if he had said twenty thousand, but a certain juvenile modesty restrained him."

Or that lovely bit—a mild and gentlemanlike leer, if one may say so—with which he brings to a close his description of the turmoil in the courtyard of the commander of the king's musketeers:

"To make way through these turbulent and conflicting waves, one had to be an officer, a great noble, or a pretty woman."

And here, amid the racket and the bravura of antechambers and rooms of audience a fleeting touch of reverie, soft and disarming:

"M. de Tréville . . . smiled on receiving the compliment, the Béarnese accent of which recalled to him at the same time his youth and his country, a double remembrance which makes a man smile at all ages."

Sometimes he warns you, but always expeditiously, and so you say: "This is for my own good—he is not prating—I am glad he told me." As here:

"Louis XIII, like all weak minds, was miserably wanting in generosity of feeling."

Here, too, forewarned is forearmed:

"A rogue does not laugh in the same way an honest man does; a hypocrite does not shed the same sort of tears as fall from the eyes of a man of good faith."

He can characterize with a sword thrust. Who needs a page about brave, mystical, dreamy Aramis after this line and a half about him in the account of the duel with the Englishmen, with which the second volume opens:

"Aramis, who had the third canto of his poem to finish, made all the despatch of a man very much pressed for time."

Here is d'Artagnan himself in three lines:

"Imagine to yourself Don Quixote at eighteen; Don Quixote without his corselet, his coat of mail, and his cuistres [thigh armor]; Don Quixote clothed in a woolen doublet, the blue color of which had faded into a nameless shade between lees of wine and a heavenly azure."

Dumas said in three words what the world has decided is the essence of most matters. It was "Cherchons la femme." That is not in "The Three Musketeers," but in his "Mohicans of Paris."

Two specimens of his more sustained style you will relish amid the exhilarating staccato. The first is old d'Artagnan's parting counsel to the son going forth to make a name in the world:

"'My son,' said the old Gascon nobleman—in that pure Béarn patois of which Henry IV could never rid himself—'my son, this horse was born on the estate of your father, about thirteen years ago, and has remained on it ever since, which ought to make you love it. Never sell it—allow it to die tranquilly and honorably of old age; and if you make a campaign with it, take as much care of it as you would of an old servant.

"'At court, provided you have ever the honor to go there,' continued M. d'Artagnan the elder, 'an honor to which your ancient nobility gives you right, sustain worthily your name of nobleman, which has been worthily borne by your ancestors during 500 years; sustain it both for your own sake and for those that belong to you. By these I mean your relations and friends. Endure nothing from any one but M. le Cardinal and the King. It is by his courage, understand me well, by his courage alone, that a nobleman can make his way nowadays. Whoever trembles for a second perhaps lets the bait escape him which, during that exact second, fortune held out to him. You are young; you ought to be brave for two reasons—the first is that you are a Gascon, and the second is that you are my son. Be ever ready for the occasion and seek adventures. I have taught you how to handle a sword; you have thews of iron, a wrist of steel; fight on all occasions; fight the more because duels are forbidden, since, in consequence, there is twice as much courage in fighting. I have nothing to give you, my son, but fifteen crowns, my horse, and

the counsels you have just heard. Your mother will add to them a recipe for a certain balsam which she had from a Bohemian, and which has the miraculous virtue of curing all wounds that do not reach the heart. Take advantage of all, and live happily and long.' . . . Whereupon M. d'Artagnan the elder girded his own sword round his son, kissed him tenderly on both cheeks, and gave him his blessing."

The second specimen represents Dumas at his best in his infrequent vein of pure description. With a few bold strokes he sets the stage for the last of the great episodes of "The Three Musketeers"—the scene of milady's execution on a countryside which many an American soldier came to know well in 1917 and '18:

"It was near midnight. The moon, sickle-shaped in its decline, and reddened by the last traces of the storm, arose behind the little town of Armentières, which showed against its pale light the dark silhouettes of its houses, and the outline of its high belfry. In front of them the Lys rolled its waters like a river of molten lead, while on the other side was a black mass of trees, cutting a stormy sky invaded by large coppery clouds, which created a sort of twilight amid the night. On the left was an old abandoned mill, with its motionless wings, from the ruins of which an owl threw out its shrill, periodical, and monotonous cry. On the right and on the left of the road which the dismal cortege pursued, appeared a few low, stunted trees, which looked like deformed dwarfs crouching down to watch men traveling at this sinister hour.

"From time to time a broad sheet of lightning opened the horizon in its whole width, darted like a serpent over the black mass of trees, and, like a terrible scimitar, cleft asunder the heavens and the waters. Not a breath of wind now disturbed the heavy atmosphere. A death-like silence oppressed all nature, the soil was humid and glittering with the rain which had recently fallen, and the refreshed herbs threw forth their perfume with additional energy."

Action! Action! Action! That is the secret of a master whose books are as alive and as engaging after nearly a century as they were in the days when Paris stormed the stalls for the latest one. Action was not alone his literary method; it was the man. "I have never hooted," he said, "at the great spectacle of the drama of Life." It is one of the grandest, heartiest things ever said about a spectacle so brief for each of us that it ought by each of us to be trebly enjoyed—and revered. It is a kind of religion —and good enough to carry us safely through—this joy in and

reverence for existence. The tired world is charmed and refreshed by those who can impart that pious gusto, and it will not let Dumas die because he helps it to live. Andrew Lang pronounced his popularity "the widest in the world of letters." Statistics bear out the statement. In our country alone there came out within a recent year two new editions of "The Three Musketeers"—one a stately 700-page volume from the Appleton press, with the dashing Maurice Leloir's 250 pictures, and that you may buy for $3; the other a bulky wad of 400 pages—fair enough print—in paper covers, which comes from the Four Seas press and may be had for a quarter. There is the good edition in limp leather which is a staple at all the book stores and costs $2.

Writing twenty-three years after his father's death in 1870, Alexandre Dumas fils said that in those twenty-three years 2,840,000 volumes of the elder Dumas' works had been published and sold in France. The figures did not include 80,000,000 of illustrated parts sold separately. More eloquent than the son's estimate was what a great French surgeon told him—this was in 1893. "All our hospital patients," he said, "recover or die with one of your father's books under their pillow. When we wish to make them forget the terror of an approaching operation, the tediousness of convalescence, or the dread of death, we prescribe one of your father's novels, and they are able to forget."

That touched and pleased the son deeply and he wrote these words in apostrophe to his father—you will find them in the new Appleton issue:

> "By dint of arousing their interest and enthusiasm, of calling up tears or smiles in those big children styled men, they have come to look upon you as one of their own family, and they call you 'Father Dumas.' I fancy I see you by the side of the kindly La Fontaine. You are the smiling grandfather who relates in the long evenings beautiful legends of the past."

But there is something more important in the lure of Dumas than the high-souled entertainment he gives us—more important for our culture as citizens. In the acquirement of that culture, history is the supreme factor and "The Three Musketeers" and its sequels "Twenty Years After" and "Vicomte de Bragelonne"

are, like Shakespeare's "Henry the Fifth" and "Richard the Third," and Scott's romances and Thackeray's "Henry Esmond" and Kingsley's "Hereward the Wake" and Charles Reade's "The Cloister and the Hearth" among the prime *lure books* of the world. With Dumas' outstanding historical novels a boy can joyously get the lay of the land, the background, the color, the spirit of long periods of French history, as of the time of Henry II in "The Two Dianas" and "The Duke of Savoy's Page," and the time of Charles IX in "Queen Margot," and the time of Henry III in "La Dame de Monsoreau" and "The Forty-Five," and the time of Richelieu and Mazarin in the "Musketeers" series, and the time of the Revolution, and before it, in "The Queen's Necklace" and "The Taking of the Bastille" and "The Countess of Charney," and so on and on—an enchanting land all the way. All these books—under one title or another, for the titles of the Dumas translations do weirdly vary—are readily to be had in English, and your boys and girls having gone through them, you will not find it difficult to lure them into Lady Jackson's delightful fourteen volumes of French annals grouped under such titles as "Old Paris," "The Old Régime," "The Court of France in the Sixteenth Century," "The Last of the Valois," "The First of the Bourbons," and "The French Court and Society."

Having gone so far, the young reader will require no more luring or leading. The first thing you know he will be demanding such books as Perkins' "France Under Richelieu and Mazarin" and Molière's plays, and Carlyle and Thiers and McCarthy on the French Revolution, and then, be assured, he will be safe for the rest of his days—safe as reader and safe as citizen.

## XI

## SHAKESPEARE'S "HAMLET," AND ADVENTURES IN THE FURNESS VARIORUM

(First acted in 1600 or 1601; first published in 1603)

*KITTY—Shikspur? Shikspur? Who wrote it? No, I never read Shikspur.*

*LADY BAB.—Then you have an immense pleasure to come.*

("High Life Below Stairs," Act II, Scene 1, by the Rev. James Townley, 1715-1778.)

We say we read "Hamlet." We do not. We peck at it. We see it enacted two or three or four times in our lives, and then, like the honest colonel of dragoons who after his view of Irving's Hamlet was asked how he liked it, we "enjoy the quotations." Only we are not so honest as he was.

From the store of editions of Shakespeare that have remained unopened and unstudied since the day your grandaunt was married—when all the bridesmaids said, "O, what a pretty set!"—you could assemble enough copies of "Hamlet" to equip all the poor-boys-who-will-become-famous in this country, thus enabling them thirty years hence to tell the helpful magazines of What I Owe to My Early Reading of Shakespeare. They put in the Bible, too. 'Tis equal cant.

The tragedy of "Hamlet" is not that final scene which moved even the hardy and expeditious Fortinbras—Hamlet's antithesis—to exclaim, "O, proud death, what feast is toward in thine eternal cell?" The tragedy is that a highly exciting and thought-provoking story has been lectured and essayed almost to death. The generality of mankind get at "Hamlet," if they get at it at all, through the lectures and essays. They do not get at it through the sole method which would make it their possession. That method is to read it not necessarily *in* the Furness Variorum edi-

tion of "Hamlet," for that is a bulky volume to hold, but with the Variorum ready to your hand for reference you can do your actual reading in a less cumbersome issue of the play. Part of the joy to be derived from the Furness Variorum is that its notes give back to us the significance of savory old words in the play that have dropped out of current speech or have become blurred and enfeebled. Its hardly lesser benefaction is that it glows with many of the extraordinarily picturesque and often very illuminating sidelights and full glares which actors have brought to bear on the rôle of Hamlet. This edition, which is one of the glories of American scholarship, is published in two portly volumes and will cost you $12, but, if you really wish to know "Hamlet," you will never make a more profitable purchase. The way of knowing which it makes possible is not boresome. Sometimes it becomes as exhilarating as a game.

For my part I like to know, and I thoroughly enjoy digging out the fact, that Shakespeare, careless workman although he often was, also was so deft a workman when he wanted to be that he could in two one-syllable words create in a soldier-auditor at a performance of "Hamlet" the feeling that the play opens on a note of acute nervous tension. But I do not get the feeling of that instant and exciting note by poring over the mass of maundering commentary which has smothered "Hamlet" nearly to death. Georg Brandes, whose stimulating appreciation of "Hamlet" in his "William Shakespeare: A Critical Study" you will enjoy for its vivid, facile scholarship, often said that the number of books about "Hamlet" is almost as large as the total number of books in the literature of one of the smaller European peoples—the Slovaks, for example.

So the important point is not whether you have read a thousandth part of the "Hamlet" literature but—

Have you read "Hamlet"?

Hear the acclamation of the answer—

"Why, of course! What a question!"

Nobody ever challenges that answer. It is a conspiracy the most successful in literature. Everybody joins it as a measure of self-protection, with the result that, the inquiry never being made,

does not have to be answered. The agreement not to bore one another with a question that compels a lie is perfect.

But did we—we of the generality, I mean—ever read "Hamlet" in the sense of making it our possession? If it is the world's supreme achievement in poetic drama and philosophic poetry—and the world is unanimous about that—then surely it is worth possessing. Being worth possessing, it is worth while to know something about it. Just to try out my immediates, I made a list of a dozen questions which anybody who has read the play attentively and read a little about its author should be able to answer offhand. In order not to annoy the reader both the questions and the answers are given:

What is the name of Hamlet's father? Hamlet. Of the king on the throne when the play opens? Claudius.

Who is Reynaldo? A confidential servant whom Polonius sends to Paris to spy on Laertes. The reason for the scene in which he appears is not clear.

Who are Cornelius and Voltimand? The ambassadors whom King Claudius sends to Norway to suppress young Fortinbras' warlike preparations against Denmark.

Who is Lamond? A Norman gentleman not appearing in the play, but the subject of one of the most brilliant bits of description in it.

What poison did Claudius pour in King Hamlet's ears? Hebenon, which was probably henbane, so called because it was a poison especially destructive to fowl.

What is doing in Denmark at the opening of the play? Extraordinarily strict watch is kept by all sentinels. Cannon are being cast daily. War material is being bought abroad, and the shipyards are working overtime, including Sunday. Marcellus gives a pithy and vivid description of all this activity, the reason for which is suspicion of the purposes of Hamlet's antithesis, the vigorous and ambitious young Fortinbras of Norway.

How do we know that Hamlet is thirty years old? The first gravedigger explicitly says so.

Why did Shakespeare change Hamlet's age from nineteen in his early version of the play to thirty in the finished product?

Because when he had elaborated the play he had put more wisdom into the mind of the prince than a boy of nineteen could have uttered.

What curious change did Shakespeare make as to the motive of Laertes' return early in the play from France to Denmark? In the first edition Laertes says he came to attend King Hamlet's funeral. Shakespeare must have thought that was not courtier-like, for later he made Laertes tell King Claudius that he came to attend his coronation.

What happens on "the plain in Denmark"? Hamlet meets Fortinbras' soldiers and utters a great soliloquy on war, usually omitted when the play is acted. This is the only scene taking place beyond the bounds of Elsinore. It is an essential part of Shakespeare's characterization of Hamlet by the method of contrasts.

Where do we learn in "Hamlet" that fruit was the dessert of meals in Shakespeare's time? In act II, scene 2, where Polonius says to Claudius: "My news shall be the fruit to that great feast."

What member of Shakespeare's family was also named Hamlet? His son Hamnet (also written Hamlet in those times), who was Judith's twin brother and who died at the age of eleven.

Does Hamlet ever seriously say that he was actually insane? He does explicitly say so in the last scene of the last act. His testimony is not conclusive, however, because the insane are said never to acknowledge their condition.

Was "Hamlet" popular in Shakespeare's time? It was then, as it is now, a veritable best seller. It was published in quarto five times, if not oftener, during the poet's life.

You should feel sorry for your children if they sit down to "Hamlet" without a helper. And yet it is without helpers that the poor lambs have these master works thrust upon them. The youngling is expected to catch up, as he reads, a knowledge and an understanding of things which his elders neither know nor understand. So reading, he must many a time wonder what the people in "Hamlet" are raving about. He will come upon the words "extravagant and erring" (Act I, Scene 1, Line 154) where they are used in a sense that implies neither absurdity nor wrongdoing,

but only wandering. He will find the words "admire," "admired," and "admiration" used in a sense that has so little to do with the sense of an enthusiastically favorable impression that to read them in that sense is sometimes to reduce the text to gibberish and sometimes to distort it.

Everybody jibes at the commentators on Shakespeare—those copious Slovakians, so to speak. But a commentator is one thing and a fact-giver quite another. "Hamlet" needs the fact-givers. The exact date of the first performance of the play is not known, but the tragedy is certainly more than three centuries and a quarter old. In that lapse of time this has happened in connection with the play: (1) A vast body of tradition, literary and histrionic, has grown up around it. (2) Scores of words used by Shakespeare have taken on meanings greatly modified from—and sometimes quite opposite to—the meanings which they had for him and his hearers. Numerous customs, too, have changed or been altogether discarded, and so his reference to many a genial and many a stupid mode and manner of human interchange is meaningless to us, unless we read his book with the aid of books that tell the ever fascinating tale of how lived our fathers nine or ten generations removed from us.

There is more than the mere learning of old definitions in studying words which, as you might say, had drifted away from us across a sea of centuries but now are again cast, maimed and changed, upon the shore of our time. They become, if we will tenderly examine them, messengers to us from our kin that have lain three hundred years in their graves, speaking to us their speech.

The fancy is pretty enough—but let us be specific: Let us, as Hamlet says to the First Player, "study, for a need, some dozen or sixteen lines," starting with the thrill Shakespeare wished to communicate to his soldier-auditors. Did ever a story begin better!

BERNARDO. Who's there?
FRANCISCO. (*on sentry-go before a king's castle. It is midnight and very cold*). Nay, answer me: stand, and unfold yourself.

BERNARDO. Long live the king!
FRANCISCO. Bernardo?
BERNARDO. He.
FRANCISCO. You come most carefully upon your hour.
BERNARDO. 'Tis now struck twelve; get thee to bed, Francisco.
FRANCISCO. For this relief much thanks: 'tis bitter cold,
And I am sick at heart.

(How deeply three phrases in those nine short lines have bitten themselves into the common coinage of English speech—"for this relief much thanks"—"bitter cold"—"sick at heart." Skip to line 11, and you have another—"not a mouse stirring.")

To resume:

BERNARDO. Have you had quiet guard?
FRANCISCO. Not a mouse stirring.
BERNARDO. Well, good-night.
If you do meet Horatio and Marcellus,
The rivals of my watch bid them make haste.
FRANCISCO. I think I hear them. Stand ho! Who's there?
HORATIO. Friends to this ground.
MARCELLUS. And liegemen to the Dane.
FRANCISCO. Give you good-night.
MARCELLUS. O, farewell, honest soldier:
Who hath relieved you?
FRANCISCO. Bernardo has my place.
Give you good-night. [*He departs.*]
MARCELLUS. Holla! Bernardo!
BERNARDO. Say,
What, is Horatio there?
HORATIO. A piece of him.
BERNARDO. Welcome, Horatio: Welcome, good Marcellus.
MARCELLUS. What, has this thing appear'd again to-night?
BERNARDO. I have seen nothing.
MARCELLUS. Horatio says 'tis but our fantasy.

There is a total of three and twenty lines.

Did Dumas in his liveliest strain of cut and thrust ever drive his atmosphere in upon a scene with surer swiftness and precision! What do you glean from this staccato half page? I glean first that in the mind of the man who utters the first two words of the play a state of acute nervous tension exists, for any soldier will

tell me that Bernardo, when he challenges a sentinel, violates one of the fundamentals of military usage. Therefore he, himself a soldier, must be in a high state of excitement and apprehension—even of fear—so to err. Thus Shakespeare, with the first two words of his play, rouses the interest of our soldier-spectator. Pregnant words in themselves, then, and the source also of a fine phrase by that prince of fact-giving and analysis, Samuel Coleridge; for, of this *faux pas* of Bernardo's, he said, "A brave man is never so peremptory as when he fears that he is afraid."

The sentinel curtly resents the breach of soldierly usage, and says, "Nay, answer me," and Bernardo replies, "Long live the king!" Now, watch your step, for you will be saying that "Long live the king!" was the password for the night. It was not. In Shakespeare's time—and this play is a picture of Elizabethan England at the end of the sixteenth century, and not of Denmark in the eleventh, which was the real Hamlet's time—in Shakespeare's time, I say, "Long live the king" was the equivalent of the phrase "A friend," which we give when we are challenged by a sentry.

We approach this sentry, Francisco, and learn, apropos of nothing except that he is glad to be off watch, that he is "sick at heart." About what? Ah, Shakespeare does not tell. He is busy with color—laying it on boldly, shrilly—in staccato, as it were. He must work fast. He does. He has used eight and a half lines (two of them of one word each), and has given you tension, cold and melancholy, and a watch being very strictly kept. We have been hurled into the situation.

Once, in the state theater of Sweden, I saw them emphasize all this bleakness and mystery in a masterly way. The stage was almost dark. The four entering and departing soldiers moved against a kind of bluish darkness—battlements and a chill sky very faintly and remotely indicated. But you did not lose their faces—neither the anxious face of Bernardo, nor the skeptical expression of Horatio, nor yet the expectant glance of Marcellus. For, to the left of the stage as you faced it glowed a brazier, and as the shuddering men passed to and fro they would pause before it and warm their numbed fingers, and as they bent above

it its red glow shone upward upon their faces—darkness all around them still. It was masterly. The players had gripped Shakespeare.

These exhilarating disclosures obtained by a moderately attentive reading of "Hamlet" are not negligible. There are some not so obvious, and they demand stricter attention. Carlyle said that he who knows only his own language knows none. However that may be, it is certain that he who knows his own language in only one period of its development knows very little about it and misses a great deal of important word history. Bernardo speaks of Horatio and Marcellus as "the rivals of my watch." If you read the word "rivals" in only the sense it has to-day, you will read precisely the opposite to what Bernardo meant. He meant neighbors, partners, for he used the word in its original significance of near neighbors (rivales) by the same brook (rivus). In the first printed text of "Hamlet" Bernardo did say "partners of my watch." Why did Shakespeare make the change? We do not know. But we get a fleeting glimpse of him at work. In any case this is the only place in all his plays where he used rivals in its earlier sense.

Go now to line 41 in this scene. The Ghost appears to the soldiers, and instantly Marcellus says to Horatio, "Thou art a scholar; speak to it." Why does he say that? Because Latin was the language of exorcism, and only scholars had Latin. Try line 65 of this same scene. Marcellus is saying that twice before has the Ghost come and "jump at this dead hour." Jump was a legitimate adverb in Shakespeare's time, and meant "just," but was considered stronger.

Toward the close of the scene the stage directions say "The cock crows," whereat the Ghost vanishes. When Garrick played Hamlet the audience used to hear the sound of cock-crowing. Now such business would only rouse laughter.

Thus does taste change with the lessening of man's credulity. Anything is legitimate when everything is believed. In England, so late as Garrick's time, you would find that nine-tenths of your theaterful believed in ghosts.

Thus, with a few thrilling lines of the text in a paper-bound copy of "Hamlet"—and that copy laid open on the corresponding

page of noble old Furness—you start on your adventures in the Variorum. You have nearly 4,000 lines to go—new entertainment, new instruction, new illumination, and the quaint, the curious, and the unexpected leaping up to you from nearly every line of the play now, for to nearly every line the wise old scholar brought his profitable bit, not of routine "commentary," but of helpful fact and enriching allusion gleaned from the whole vast field of Shakespearean lore. Bon voyage!

## XII

## STERNE'S "SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY"

(First published in 1768)

### *A FRENCH CRITIC ON STERNE'S STRANGE FACULTY*

*Figure to yourself a man who goes on a journey, wearing on his eyes a pair of marvelously magnifying spectacles. A hair on his hand, a speck on a tablecloth, a fold of a moving garment, will interest him; at this rate he will not go very far; he will go six steps in a day, and will not quit his room. He perceives the infinitely little, and describes the imperceptible. This is truly a strange talent, made up of blindness and insight, which resembles those diseases of the retina in which the over-excited nerve becomes at once dull and penetrating, incapable of seeing what the most ordinary eyes perceive, capable of observing what the most piercing sight misses.*
("History of English Literature.") HIPPOLYTE ADOLPHE TAINE.

STERNE traveled joyously. That is why his little book called "A Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy" remains after a century and a half one of the vivid darlings of literature. It is no book in any exact sense, but a sentient complex of wisdom and whim, of wit and ribaldry, of acuteness and excess, of sentiment that is pure and reasoned, and of a sentimentality that is occasionally downright maudlin.

The "Sentimental Journey" is the delight of persons who love a dash of the illicit in their literature and it is the wonder book of the most fastidious stylists.

"A style," said Lowell (address entitled "The Study of Modern Languages") who knew many styles and had one of his own—"a style which, when he [Sterne] lets it alone, is as perfect as any I know," and he called Sterne "the most subtle humorist since Shakespeare." Men skillful in definition grope for phrases that will define the peculiar lightness of that style, its gossamer quality, its—not power, exactly—but its deftness in communicating the incommunicable. Walter Sichel in his big book about Sterne

tried for a word or a phrase that should define the stylistic charm of Sterne. Trailing him through pages, you find him calling the "Sentimental Journey" a "succession of vignettes," "pastels," a "liqueur," "all filigree," and "dissolving views." Percy Fitzgerald, the biographer of Boswell, in another big book about Sterne, hit upon perhaps as happy a phrase as any when he spoke of the "Journey" as "little pictures which for delicacy seem like the series of medallions done on Sèvres china which we sometimes see in old French cabinets." Coleridge, the best definer among English critics of the attributes of style, praised Sterne's power of giving significance to "the most evanescent minutiæ in thought, feeling, look, and gesture."

Such men Sterne bewitched. They knew how doubtful were his morals, how foolish and unworthy were his philanderings, but they could not resist him when he took pen in hand. Leigh Hunt called him "master of bonhomie" and said that his Uncle Toby was the "quintessence of the milk of human kindness." The austere Paul Elmer More says "his smile is almost a caress." Even Carlyle could not resist him, as you shall see by turning to his first essay on Jean Paul Richter.

There is no profound secret in all this.

It is the secret of sheer charm.

In the "Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy" we find little about the France and Italy of geography, but a great deal about the France and Italy of human nature in its whimsical and its universal aspects—a begging monk, a courtly old soldier, a receptive grisette, an amorous marquise, an adroit valet, a pretty shopwoman patient with an elderly fool, a peddler of ruffles, a broken chevalier, a farmer, a girl whose mind heartbreak has unhinged, a witty courtier of Louis XV—the inn, the wayside, the palace courtyard and antechamber, the salon, the theater lobby. All these people and places are made known in tiny, subtle pastels, seeming only casual, fleeting records of fancy and reverie, but as definite as the time of day because Laurence Sterne could do anything with words.

People and places that routine persons fail to find interesting, interested Sterne almost to ecstasy. "Every ship," said Emerson,

"is a romantic object except that we sail in." To Sterne, on the contrary, the ship in which he was sailing through life was the most romantic of objects and his fellow passengers were inexhaustible sources of joy, and of a pensive grieving that he enjoyed not less than he enjoyed joy.

"I pity the man," he said, "who can travel from Dan to Beersheba and cry, 'Tis all barren.'"

That is his keynote. From it proceeds an achievement the like of which in the annals of travels and of letters can be numbered on the fingers of the two hands: He produced a travel book that also is literature. The bibliography of travel is enormous. Nine hundred and ninety-nine thousandths of it is negligible as literature. The exceptions—like Marco Polo's "Travels," James Boswell's "Account of Corsica" and "Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides," George Borrow's "The Bible in Spain," Kinglake's "Eothen," Dana's "Two Years Before the Mast," Parkman's "Oregon Trail," Mark Twain's "Life on the Mississippi," Muriel Dowie's "A Girl in the Carpathians," some of Melville's books, and some of Hudson's, *and* the "Sentimental Journey"—stand out like the red letter days in far wanderings by land and by sea.

There are Baedeker travelers and there are human interest travelers. The first inform; the second inspire. Sterne explored not the highways but the human interests of the world. He taught mankind how to travel as kind men. Travel finds a man out. Is he truculent, peevish, overbearing?—the scowl and the rasping tone tell all to the world, and all suffer through him. Is he civil and receptive?—his civilities are repaid a thousand fold and his receptivity is a sight draft on good will that the most sequestered communities honor gladly.

"Hail," said Sterne (the passage opens one of the tiny chapters on his Paris wanderings):

> "Hail ye small sweet courtesies of life, for smooth do ye make the road of it! like grace and beauty which beget inclinations to love at first sight; 'tis ye who open this door and let the stranger in."

His book might not make the most circumspect and methodical of travelers, for Sterne was neither, but certainly a pleasant and sagacious one, and Sterne was both. Early in the "Journey,"

before he has gotten himself out of Calais, he sketches his philosophy of travel, and in asking the printer to reproduce the passage for us I have also asked him to follow Sterne's lawlessly eloquent punctuation—his dashes long and short, his italics, his capitals, his quotes and his nonquotes, and the printer will—if he feels like it. (You ought, my friend, to feel like it, for printers had no better friend than Sterne. His copy was like copper plate. You may see bits of it in the British Museum to-day—the letters black and precise, the lines even, the changes few, for "to scratch out," he said, "is a liberty I have never ventured to take with anything I write.") But this is not getting forward from Calais, so here is the beginning and end of wisdom for pleasant travelers:

"What a large volume of adventures may be grasped within this little span of life, by him who interests his heart in every thing, and who, having eyes to see what time and chance are perpetually holding out to him as he journeyeth on his way, misses nothing he can *fairly* lay his hands on.— . . .

"I pity the man who can travel from *Dan* to *Beersheba,* and cry 'Tis all barren—and so it is; and so is all the world to him, who will not cultivate the fruits it offers. I declare, said I, clapping my hands cheerily together, that was I in a desert, I would find out wherewith in it to call forth my affections—if I could not do better, I would fasten them upon some sweet myrtle, or seek some melancholy cypress to connect myself to—I would court their shade, and greet them kindly for their protection—I would cut my name upon them, and swear they were the loveliest trees throughout the desert: if their leaves wither'd I would teach myself to mourn, and when they rejoiced, I would rejoice along with them."

Two years before the publication of the "Sentimental Journey Through France and Italy," Tobias Smollett's "Travels Through France and Italy" appeared. Smollett was the traveler truculent, although his book is readable. To Sterne it seemed ill designed to forward the comity between nations and the good feeling between citizens of different nations which would be, in his view of human nature, a fair start toward the millennial dawn. So for Smollett he invented a nickname that has lived in literature —Carlyle, among others, uses it—and on the page over which the printer has just been swearing Sterne exchanges the time of day with Tobias Smollett:

"The learned SMELFUNGUS traveled from Boulogne to Paris—from Paris to Rome—and so on—but he set out with the spleen and jaundice, and every object he pass'd by was discoloured or distorted—He wrote an account of them, but 'twas nothing but the account of his miserable feelings.

"I met Smelfungus in the grand portico of the pantheon—he was just coming out of it—*'Tis nothing but a huge cockpit,* said he—I wish you had said nothing worse of the Venus of Medicis, replied I—for in passing through Florence, I had heard he had fallen foul upon the goddess, and used her worse than a common strumpet, without the least provocation in nature.

"I popp'd upon Smelfungus again at Turin, in his return home; and a sad tale of sorrowful adventures he had to tell, 'wherein he spoke of moving accidents by flood and field, and of the cannibals which each other eat: the Anthropophagi'—he had been flay'd alive, and bedevil'd, and used worse than St. Bartholomew, at every stage he had come at——

"—I'll tell it, cried Smelfungus, to the world. You had better tell it, said I, to your physician."

All nations, the urbane old French officer told Sterne (when Sterne had seen a demonstration on the part of a Paris audience that shocked him)—all nations have their refinements and their grossnesses, and the officer continued:

"—that he had been in most countries, but never in one where he found not some delicacies, which others seemed to want. *Le* POUR *et le* CONTRE *se trouvant en chaque nation;* there is a balance, said he, of good and bad everywhere; and nothing but the knowing it is so, can emancipate one half of the world from the prepossession which it holds against the other—that the advantage of travel, as it regarded the *sçavoir vivre,* was by seeing a great deal both of men and manners; it taught us mutual toleration; and mutual toleration, concluded he, making me a bow, taught us mutual love."

Leaving Sterne's ethics of travel to come to his artistry we come to the immortal part of him. He is a classic, but no antique. His words still sparkle with the dew of morning and his fancies are as exultant as the notes of birds waking to the sun. The delicate inventiveness with which he transmutes reverie into picture is a marvel of word maneuvering.

Let any man whose nerves have been soothed, whose mind has been rested, and whose fancy has been rekindled by dipping briefly

into a masterpiece of literature try to transfer to the printed page an exact sketch of the refreshment and content which have been vouchsafed him. Let him try. How feeble is the result, how commonplace, how closely skirting the peril of mawkishness. Throw it away—it is less than naught. But one day Sterne, wearied by much running to and fro amidst officialdom, and anxious about his passports, took up while waiting in a room of the palace at Versailles a copy of "Much Ado About Nothing" and—"transported myself instantly from the chair I sat in to Messina in Sicily, and got so busy with Don Pedro and Benedict, and Beatrice, that I thought not of Versailles, the Count, or the Passport."

Then this:

"Sweet pliability of man's spirit, that can at once surrender itself to illusions, which cheat expectation and sorrow of their weary moments! —Long—long since had he number'd out my days, had I not trod so great a part of them upon this enchanted ground; when my way is too rough for my feet, or too steep for my strength, I get off it, to some smooth velvet path which fancy has scattered over with rosebuds of delights; and having taken a few turns in it, come back strengthen'd and refresh'd. ——When evils press sore upon me, and there is no retreat from them in this world, then I take a new course—I leave it—and as I have a clearer idea of the elysian fields than I have of heaven, I force myself, like Æneas, into them— . . .

"*Surely this is not walking in a vain shadow—nor does man disquiet himself* in vain *by it*—he oftener does so in trusting the issue of his commotions to reason only—I can safely say for myself, I was never able to conquer any one single bad sensation in my heart so decisively, as by beating up as fast as I could for some kindly and gentle sensation to fight it upon its own ground."

That, in its marshaling of fancies and of phrases, is to command the uncommandable—to bid the unbidable birds come fluttering down upon the page—singing. It is the kind of thing which, a century after Sterne had laid down his pen and left the "Sentimental Journey" unfinished (for it was to have been four times as long), was in David Masson's mind when he said, "Even now the grace, the insinuating delicacy, the light lucidity, the diamond sparkle of Sterne's style make reading him a peculiar literary pleasure."

Nor are all Sterne's best things the elaborations of an intent

artificer. He could be pithy. Everybody knows that "God tempers the wind to the shorn lamb" comes in the "Journey." But that immortalism is not wholly his—only the graceful setting. For he, taking, like Molière, his material where he found it, took his lamb from the "Dieu mésure le froid à la brebis tondue" of the sixteenth century printer, Henri Estienne, and gave thereby the printer an immortality which his well-printed, well-arranged lexicons have not given him. Only by running down the pilferer were men able to discover the originator.

But these, also from the "Journey," are more surely Sterne's own:

"It is not in the power of every one to taste humour, however much he may wish it; it is the gift of God! and a true feeler always brings half the entertainment with him."

"Knowledge in most of its branches, and in most affairs, is like music in an Italian street, whereof those may partake who pay nothing."

"Life is too short to be long about the forms of it."

And this about women is the philanderer's perfect defense as well as complete epitome of Sterne's sex-morals:

"——God bless them all! said I, . . . after all the foibles I have seen, and all the satires I have read against them, still I love them; being firmly persuaded that a man, who has not a sort of an affection for the whole sex, is incapable of loving a single one as he ought."

Sterne could feel for his immediates—not commonly a virtue of professing and professional sentimentalists. The passage, which follows the request for a day's leave by the valet, La Fleur, a real character—had been a drummer boy in the French army—is worth reprinting if only as a corrective of the lying sneer of Walpole and the epigram of Lord Byron about Sterne's crying over a dead donkey but leaving his mother to starve. Sterne needed La Fleur that day, but:

"But we must *feel,* not argue, in these embarrassments——the sons and daughters of service part with liberty, but not with nature, in their contracts; they are flesh and blood, and have their little vanities and wishes in the midst of the house of bondage, as well as their task-masters—no doubt they have set their self-denials at a price—and their expectations are so unreasonable, that I would often disappoint

them, but that their condition puts it so much in my power to do it. . . . Thou shalt go, La Fleur! said I."

"A pretty book, no doubt," some will say, "but why not take the 'Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy' as justification for nominating Sterne to the academy of best sellers of the ages?" Reason enough. For, having had the taste of Sterne's quality in the little book, gladly will he who comes new to this magician turn to the bigger—the book that holds all men's relative, our Uncle Toby—Uncle Toby, whom Hazlitt called "one of the finest compliments ever paid to human nature."

## XIII

## PLUTARCH'S "LIVES"

(Composed in the latter part of the first and the early part of the second centuries of the Christian era)

### *WHAT A KING WROTE TO HIS WIFE*

*Vive Dieu. As God liveth, you could not have sent me anything which could be more agreeable than the news of the pleasure you have taken in this reading. Plutarch always delights me with a fresh novelty. To love him is to love me; for he has been long time the instructor of my youth. My good mother, to whom I owe all, and who would not wish, she said, to see her son an illustrious dunce, put this book into my hands almost when I was a child at the breast. It has been like my conscience, and has whispered in my ears many good suggestions and maxims for my conduct and the government of my affairs.*—Henri IV, to his wife, Marie de Medicis.

### *WHAT A PHILOSOPHER PUT INTO HIS SON'S HAND*

*When I was fourteen years old, he put Plutarch's "Lives" into my hand and bade me read two pages every week day and ten every holiday. It seemed at first an irksome task, but my mother asked me to read them aloud to her, and this made it easier. Lycurgus' training of the Spartan boys, Archimedes' amazing military engineering in the defense of Syracuse, Hannibal's passage of the Alps, Scipio's magnanimity and Cæsar's courage and genius won their own way, as my father knew they would with a boy, and, what is by no means common with authors, the personality of the writer also, as, for instance, where he drops the narrative to hotly censure the meanness of Cato the Elder in selling his slaves when they were past service. The style of Plutarch could commend itself even to a boy.*

EDWARD WALDO EMERSON.

### *WHAT THE HERO OF A DRAMA OF REVOLUTION SAID*

*Karl von Moor, laying his book aside.—I am disgusted with this age of puny scribblers when I read of great men in my Plutarch. . . . The glowing spark of Prometheus is burnt out, and now they substitute for it the flash of lycopodium; a stage fire, which will not so much as light a*

*pipe. The present generation may be compared to rats crawling about the club of Hercules. . . . Fellows who faint at the veriest trifle criticize the tactics of Hannibal; whimpering boys store themselves with phrases out of the slaughter at Cannæ, and blubber over the victories of Scipio, because they are obliged to construe them.*

("The Robbers," Act I, Scene 2.) SCHILLER.

THUS you see at a glance how the greatest king in Europe at the end of the sixteenth century, and the serene man of Concord in the mid-nineteenth, and the distraught hero of Schiller's drama that helped to make revolution in the troubled days of the waning eighteenth century, were interested in and instructed by the old Bœotian, and wished to share their love of him with those they loved.

Always it has been so with Plutarch. His book is more than a book. It is a bond. He is the delight of those greatly placed in the world and the first step of the untutored. The reason that he is thus a bond is not that he is profound. The reason has its source in his humanity and his readableness. Deans and schoolboys alike pore over him. Here is a letter from a school-teacher who says, "The children want a paper on Plutarch's 'Lives,'" and here is another from the dean of the college of liberal arts in a great university—Flickinger of Northwestern, an outstanding Latinist in American scholarship—and he hopes "that Plutarch's 'Lives,' which have been almost the Bible of some periods of history, will not be omitted from the book about the best sellers of the ages."

Solicitude for the book is hundreds of years old and as fresh as this morning. It is one of the most engaging things in the history of literature—or in the literature of history. That teacher in a secondary school of the most modern city of the modern world who writes that her "children" want their Plutarch has her predecessor in the good Roger Ascham, one of the great school-teachers of the ages, who used to point with pride to a favorite pupil of his—a certain Princess Elizabeth Tudor, who was to be one of the great queens of the ages and who, said he, you could see during her tarryings at Windsor castle "writing down hard phrases from Plutarch's 'Lives,' and reading more Greek," he would tartly add, "in a day than some prebendary did Latin in a week."

I open my Shakespeare alongside my Plutarch and I find that the solid bronze Plutarch left behind him about the year 100 was some fifteen centuries later transmuted into gold by an Elizabethan, and this alchemy of his we know as the plays of "Julius Cæsar," "Antony and Cleopatra," "Coriolanus," and "Timon of Athens." I lay those books aside and take up my portly edition of Mr. Wells' "Outline" and therein I find a dozen citations of Plutarch, some of them copious, and one of them—Plutarch's description of the marriage feast of Philip of Macedon—is followed by these words: "How that scene lives still, the sprawl, the flushed faces, the angry voice of the boy!" Even the studied *nil admirari* pose of Wells cannot withstand Plutarch, and on page 520 I find him lamenting that the great Constantine had no Plutarch.

Nearly half a century ago, when the Chelsea (Mass.) public library was dedicated, Mr. Lowell said it was no insignificant fact that eminent men have always loved their Plutarch, "because," he added, "example, whether for emulation or avoidance, is never so poignant as when presented to us in a striking personality."

Eminent men! From odds and ends of notes out of books and clippings out of newspapers I can patch you a paragraph about some of those eminent Plutarchians and it can begin with Petrarch, the poet of love, and end with Joseph Cannon, the statesman of practicality. Alfieri, like Shakespeare, built plays out of Plutarch —and some pretty bad ones; Montaigne loved him and wrote charmingly about him; Saint-Evremond used to read him aloud to Condé in the prince's tent; Rabelais was another of the lovers; so were Voltaire, Rousseau, and Sainte Beuve. Montesquieu extracted from Plutarch much of the material for his monumental work on the laws.

Shakespeare's friend, Ben Jonson, shared the master's admiration of him; Napoleon was a reader of Plutarch; Mr. Solle, the bookman, tells me he has heard, or read, that Plutarch was one of Roosevelt's favorite books, but we neither of us can find the reference; Sir John Lubbock put the Bœotian in his list of "100 best books"; Joaquin Miller, in 1910, gave first place among his literary loves to the "Lives"; Thoreau relished him and frequently quoted him; the French were so glad to get a good translation of

Plutarch that Henri II made the man who did the work, Jacques Amyot, a bishop, and former Speaker Cannon said that seventy-five years ago, when books were not plentiful on the Wabash, he found the "Lives" "very useful."

But of all the praisers of Plutarch I most fondly follow Emerson, because he best gave the reasons for the faith that was in him. He called him "the elixir of Greece and Rome" and "the laureate of the ancient world," and said his book was "a book of tart cathartic virtue." He said that if the world's library were burning he should fly to save his Plutarch, his Bible, his Shakespeare, and his Plato. He said, too, that Plutarch cannot be spared from the smallest library (1) "because he is so readable, which is much"; (2) "then that he is medicinal and invigorating." He often declared that "a boy has no better friend or influence than Scott, Shakespeare, Plutarch, and Homer." And this:

"Go with mean people and you think life is mean. Then read Plutarch, and the world is a proud place, peopled with men of positive qualities, with heroes and demigods standing around us, who will not let us sleep."

Who are those men?

There are fifty of them, and many of them men who were founders of civilization as we to-day, in respect to many of its essential aspects, know it—men who made the world ready for us—men who formulated society—men who fought battles that fixed some boundaries which still stand—men who built cities that still are world capitals—men who made laws that to-day are incorporate, more or less, with the body of law that governs us. In short, they were Theseus, Romulus, Lycurgus, Numa, Solon, Themistocles, Pericles, the two Catos, Lysander, Alexander, Cæsar, Demosthenes, Cicero, Antony, Marcus Brutus, and so on and on from the mists of legend which envelop Theseus and Romulus to the day in 69 A.D. when betrayed Otho fell upon his sword. With that great scene the book of Plutarch, as now arranged, closes.

From the Romulus of 753 B.C. to the Galba and Otho of 69 A.D., Plutarch gives you eight centuries of struggle and aspiration and blunder and success—a picture of a world a-building and of society getting itself founded and into some sort of order, and he does

all that by means of portraiture and apothegm. He dredged the ages for good things—illuminating anecdotes about his heroes, pithy sayings of theirs, and what things their fellow citizens said about them or they about the citizens. He had a method so distinctly his own that no man for 1,800 years has been able to equal it in two of its attributes—compactness and vividness. He gives you Julius Cæsar, the greatest man that ever lived—so Anthony Trollope who had studied him called him—full length in seventy-five pages. His finest piece of biography—Antony—is only ten pages more. His Alexander, which is packed with facts and glowing with color, is less than 100 pages. The general run of the lives is between thirty and fifty pages.

Lowell said that the names of most of Plutarch's heroes were so trumpet-like as both "to waken attention and to warrant it," but his method was not grandiose. Here is the essence of it in his own words:

"Nor is it always in the most distinguished achievements that men's virtues or vices may be best discerned; but very often an action of small note, a short saying, or a jest shall distinguish a person's real character more than the greatest sieges or the most important battles."

The best biography ever written was founded on that method, and when, early in his book, James Boswell, king of biographers, quoted those words he called Plutarch "the prince of ancient biographers." The difference, as it turned out, was that the king took five volumes to tell about one man where the prince had taken five to tell about fifty.

So who was king then?

Plutarch served appetizing olives at the banquet he spread for posterity. Here are some—salty and full of savor after the lapse of eighteen centuries—from the "Lives" and from his other good book, the "Moralia":

"It is not God that injures thee, but thyself.

"When the candles are out all women are fair.

"Simonides calls painting silent poetry, and poetry speaking painting.

"He who knows how to show the way well is sure to be well followed.

"Lysander said that the law spoke too softly to be heard in such a noise of war.

"He who deceives by an oath acknowledges that he fears his enemy, but despises God.

"A prating barber asked Archelaus how he would be trimmed. He answered, 'In silence.'

"Those who are fond of building will soon ruin themselves without the assistance of enemies.

"There is no beast more savage than man when he is possessed of power equal to his passion.

"Cato said they that were serious in ridiculous matters would be ridiculous in serious matters.

"King Agis said, 'The Lacedæmonians are not wont to ask how many, but where, are the enemy.'

"Though disbelief in religion and contempt of things divine be a great evil, superstition is a greater still.

"He was like the man who threw a stone at a bitch but hit his stepmother, on which he exclaimed, 'Not so bad!'

"Dionysius the Elder, being asked whether he was at leisure, replied, 'God forbid that that should ever happen to me.'

"Most men are more sensitive to contemptuous language than to unjust acts, for they find it harder to bear insult than injury.

"One made the observation of the people of Asia that they were all slaves to one man, merely because they could not pronounce that syllable No.

"The talkative listen to no one, for they are ever speaking. And the first evil that attends those who know not how to be silent is that they hear nothing.

"A Roman divorced from his wife, being highly blamed by his friends, who demanded, 'Was she not chaste? Was she not fair? Was she not fruitful?' holding out his shoe, asked them whether it was not new and well made. 'Yet,' added he, 'none of you can tell where it pinches me.' "

# XIV

## HAWTHORNE'S "THE SCARLET LETTER"

(First published in 1850)

*THE EYES OF HAWTHORNE*

*From whence those eyes, that poignant gaze,*
*O Spirit wont to walk the ways*
*Leading, through labyrinthine gloom,*
*Into those soundless courts of doom,*
*Where haggard souls not mercy plead,*
*But that, through stripes, they may be freed*
*From the keen goad within the breast,*
*By Conscience ever deeper pressed!*

*One else there was whose orbs of sight*
*Envisioned, thus, eternal Night,*
*With gaze as poignant, as serene,—*
*One else there was—the Florentine!*
*In realms from mortal knowledge veiled,*
*Have ye not, kinsmen, met and hailed—*
*The spark of swift recognizance*
*Forth-flashing in one mutual glance!*

EDITH M. THOMAS.

THERE are two representative works of American art which come as near perfection as, perhaps, it is granted man to bring his achievements.

One is the mysterious figure by Augustus Saint-Gaudens which keeps vigil at a woman's tomb in Washington.*

*If I had the task of taking to Europe one thing as the best work of art of America, I should take the tomb from the Rock Creek Cemetery in Washington, which was created by those three artists—Saint-Gaudens, Stanford White, and Henry Adams. Nothing we have made in this country as yet, whether paint, carving, or architecture, can equal it. This figure, an expression of the idea of death, marks, I am told, the last resting place of the wife of Henry Adams, but there is no name and no commemoration to any individual, no signature of artist or architect; it is universal and might belong to any one of us.—"From Seven to Seventy: Memoirs of a Painter and a Yankee," by Edward Simmons.

The other is the romance of "The Scarlet Letter."

In 1849 Nathaniel Hawthorne, then forty-five years old and a petty official ($1,200 a year) in a petty town, sat down in an upper bedroom to write "The Scarlet Letter." It was the seventy-third year from the foundation of the republic.

Seventy-eight years have passed since the bleak winter in Salem which brought the composition of the book, and during those seventy-eight years—as during the seventy-three that came before them—no work of literary art so nearly perfect, no other book like it, indeed, has been written by an American.

The statistics are not curious lore merely. They provide valuable instruction, for their lesson is that masterpieces—that the books which are best sellers of the ages because they are the best books of the ages—are not readily written, nor often. Such statistics are heartening, for they show honest folk who seek honestly to find the way to true literature that the truest literature is not a quantity so vast as to discourage the effort to acquire and to comprehend it. With the best and truest we shall come into intimacy close and fond if we rigorously put aside all else.

Art is sternest with her dearest children. Nathaniel Hawthorne was twenty-five years learning how to write "The Scarlet Letter."

Open the book almost at random—not necessarily to one of the supreme passages like the midnight vigil of Hester and Arthur and Pearl on the scaffold of Hester's ignominy, not to the astounding chapter XVII, so fraught with sacred intimacy and awe that perusal of it sometimes will strike the sensitive reader as almost an intrusion, not to the last page which voices itself like strains of organ music remotely heard, but to a page more nearly in the key of the book as a whole.

I select for the moment the page toward the end of Chapter XVIII, whereon is told how the forest takes an elfish child into its arms as one of its own and how its denizens seem to recognize her kinship with themselves. Few fancies could contain more perils than this fancy. A dozen betrayals are in it—the temptation to fine writing, the peril of excess, the danger that the whole thing will be reduced to namby-pamby, and the peril most likely to befall—that the attention will evaporate under the hand

and that only some words prettily strung will reach the reader. But from this page come the sighs and whispers of bending trees, and a rustling under foot, and quick moving lights from the eyes of wild creatures, their little cries, their furtive movements. The words ripple down the page—no, seem to float down upon it, leisurely, quietly, wafted by a force invisible and unheard.

With six one-syllable words Hawthorne suddenly, quite unobtrusively, humanizes the cumbrous forest so that it shall seem to mother the child. "As well as it knew how" are the words. The touch is simple and homely but no other six words could create an effect more poignant.

And the words "his domestic tree" in the lines about the squirrel! Not at the first reading of the page does one cease reading in order to linger upon them, for at the first reading the eye is gliding along with the gliding words. Later one lingers upon the detail.

But let not bepraisement encumber pleasure. This is the page:

"The great black forest—stern as it showed itself to those who brought the guilt and troubles of the world into its bosom—became the playmate of the lonely infant as well as it knew how. Somber as it was, it put on the kindest of its moods to welcome her. . . . The small denizens of the wilderness hardly took pains to move out of her path. A partridge, indeed, with a brood of ten behind her, ran forward threateningly, but soon repented of her fierceness and clucked to her young ones not to be afraid. A pigeon, alone on a low branch, allowed Pearl to come beneath, and uttered a sound as much of greeting as of alarm. A squirrel, from the lofty depths of his domestic tree, chattered either in anger or merriment—for a squirrel is such a choleric and humorous little personage that it is hard to distinguish between his moods—so he chattered at the child and flung down a nut upon her head. It was a last year's nut, and already gnawed by his sharp tooth. A fox, startled from his sleep by her light footstep on the leaves, looked inquisitively at Pearl, as doubting whether it were better to steal off or renew his nap on the same spot. A wolf, it is said—but here the tale has surely lapsed into the improbable—came up, and smelt of Pearl's robe, and offered his savage head to be patted by her hand. The truth seems to be, however, that the mother-forest, and these wild things which it nourished, all recognized a kindred wildness in the human child."

"Air," as Bishop Quayle said in one of the happiest of phrases —it comes in his essay on Hawthorne's style—"air is not more pellucid."

Long before Hawthorne became famous Longfellow reviewed "Twice Told Tales." Capitulation to Hawthorne's style was not a routine matter then. Because the review has historical value, and because Professor Longfellow deftly described what he called "the fresh and transparent beauty" of Hawthorne's writing, the review is worth quoting from. Of a style that is neither intricate nor ornate, and that still eludes most description, there is this description:

"It is as clear as running waters are; indeed, he uses words merely as stepping stones, upon which, with a free and youthful bound, his spirit crosses and recrosses the bright and rushing stream of thought."

For a writer given to musing, Hawthorne is compact. Sometimes, but without encumbering, a passage adorns his page like a marble frieze. Chapter XX—"The Minister in a Maze"—unfolds the excitements, wayward fancies and mad impulses which crowd and torture the soul of Arthur Dimmesdale during the period in which he cowers in hypocrisy, trembles on the verge of confession, and yearns for death. An insane impulse to blight virginal purity as he has blighted and blasted himself seizes him when he passes in the street a Puritan maid. The thought of what she is, and of what he is in her ideal of him, beats upon his mind. That spiritual tumult is a fantasia of chaste images and impure imaginings, but Hawthorne's expression of it has a marmoreal steadiness and definiteness:

"She was fair and pure as a lily that had bloomed in Paradise. The minister knew well that he was himself enshrined within the stainless sanctity of her heart, which hung its snowy curtains about his image, imparting to religion the warmth of love, and to love a religious purity. . . . So—with a mightier struggle than he had yet sustained—he held his Geneva cloak before his face and hurried onward, making no sign of recognition, and leaving the young sister to digest his rudeness as she might. She ransacked her conscience,—which was full of harmless little matters, like her pocket or her work-bag—and took herself to task, poor thing! for a thousand imaginary faults; and went about her household duties with swollen eyelids the next morning."

Persons who take their opinions on art and morals from persons who most stridently express opinions on art and morals, long have had some befuddled notion that "The Scarlet Letter" is a morbid book. Strident persons always say the obvious, easy thing about works of art and morals, and the obvious, easy thing to say about this masterpiece is that it is a tragedy of conscience. To say that, is to say less than half the essential thing that ought to be said about "The Scarlet Letter." The book, in its grandest aspect—in the aspect that made so careful and so gifted a craftsman and critic as William Dean Howells say that "in its kind it remains sole and it is hard to see how it shall ever be surpassed, or even companioned"—is not a tragedy. It is a triumph of expiation. It does not end in tragedy but begins there. It fulfills the mission of tragedy, and that mission is redemption of his soul by a being whom error has betrayed and affliction has marked.

Hester is triumphant in expiation wrought out in the face of the community whose well-being an act such as hers affects to disastrous issues even as surely as such an act violates the purity of the soul of the doer of the deed. Dimmesdale is triumphant in expiation wrought out in the face of death. Hester's was the nobler, harder way.

"A lie," said Hester Prynne, "is never good even though death threaten on the other side." The fundamental meaning of "The Scarlet Letter" is as obvious as that. The spiritual intricacies of the tale—the solemn, tender walk hand in hand with the Everlasting—as in truth Nathaniel Hawthorne does in this book seem to walk—the subtle skill with which the wail of tragedy is blended at the last with the harmonies of victorious expiation, cannot be better indicated than by reading the words Dimmesdale speaks to the magistrates and elders when they would take Hester's child, and his child, from her:

"She recognizes, believe me, the solemn miracle which God hath wrought, in the existence of that child. And she may feel, too—what, methinks, is the very truth—that this boon was meant, above all things else, to keep the mother's soul alive, and to preserve her from blacker depth of sin into which Satan might else have sought to plunge her!

Therefore it is good for this poor, sinful woman that she hath an infant immortality, a being capable of eternal joy or sorrow, confided to her care—to be trained up by her to righteousness—to remind her, at every moment, of her fall—but yet to teach her, as it were, by the Creator's sacred pledge, that if she bring the child to heaven the child also will bring its parent thither! Herein is the sinful mother happier than the sinful father. For Hester Prynne's sake, then, and no less for the poor child's sake, let us leave them as Providence hath seen fit to place them!"

Austerely, now in the strain of bitter woe, now in a strain of grieving meditation, the tale moves on. It utters itself now in passages that are as sincere and strong as steel, but as dramatic as the tirades of a French play. Its economy of means is one of the marvels of literature. There are but four essential characters—Hester, Dimmesdale, Pearl, and Chillingworth—and only they are elaborated. Coupled with such reticence of treatment is an artist's reverence in the use of the English language that gives to language the dignity of an ancient strain released by worshipers wholly trustful.

At the last quietude—deep, abiding calm—like the calm of the sea when it rests after storm:

"And, as Hester Prynne had no selfish ends, nor lived in any measure for her own profit and enjoyment, people brought all their sorrows and perplexities, and besought her counsel, as one who had herself gone through a mighty trouble. Women, more especially—in the continually recurring trials of wounded, wasted, wronged, misplaced, or erring and sinful passion—or with the dreary burden of a heart unyielded, because unvalued and unsought—came to Hester's cottage, demanding why they were so wretched, and what the remedy! Hester comforted and counseled them as best she might."

# XV

## BYRON'S "CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE"

(First two cantos published in 1812, third canto in 1816, and the fourth in 1818)

### *THE BEGINNING AND THE END OF THE LAST CENTURY ON BYRON*

*He is the absolute monarch of words.* LADY BYRON.
(In a letter to Lady Anne Barnard, author of "Auld Robin Grey.")

*Byron is not an artist or a thinker, or a creator in the higher sense, but a strong personality: he is endlessly clever, and is now unduly depreciated.*
(In a conversation with his son.) LORD TENNYSON.

IN the third leap year of the nineteenth century, and on the extra day of that year, was published in London a volume containing the first two cantos of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage: A Romaunt." For the young author—who, from his head, which was of classic beauty and regularity, to his feet, which were pitifully deformed, was the most exceptional of mankind—chance seemed to have hit upon the most exceptional of dates in the calendar.

That date—February 29, 1812—instantly became memorable in the annals of English poetry and of liberal thought.

Within a few hours young Lord Byron could say, as he did say years later to the poet Moore, "I awoke one morning and found myself famous."

BEFORE WATERLOO

("Childe Harold," Canto III, Stanzas 21 and 22.)

*There was a sound of revelry by night,*
*And Belgium's capital had gathered then*
*Her Beauty and her Chivalry, and bright*
*The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men.*
*A thousand hearts beat happily; and when*
*Music arose with its voluptuous swell,*
*Soft eyes looked love to eyes which spake again,*
*And all went merry as a marriage-bell;*
*But hush! hark! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell!*

*Did ye not hear it?—No; 'twas but the wind,*
*Or the car rattling o'er the stony street;*
*On with the dance! let joy be unconfined;*
*No sleep till morn, when Youth and Pleasure meet*
*To chase the glowing Hours with flying feet—*
*But, hark!—that heavy sound breaks in once more*
*As if the clouds its echo would repeat;*
*And nearer, clearer, deadlier than before!*
*Arm! Arm! It is—it is—the cannon's opening roar!*

Hardly any picturesque circumstance which could have attended the publication of a masterpiece was lacking to the publication of "Childe Harold." Two days before the event the poet, then in the second month of his twenty-fifth year, had made his first speech in the House of Lords. Men so proficient in and such excellent judges of parliamentary eloquence as Richard Brinsley Sheridan, Lord Holland and Lord Grenville highly commended Byron's maiden speech, and the stormy petrel of English politics, Sir Francis Burdett, pronounced it "the best speech made by a lord since the Lord knows when!" "Some of the periods," said Lord Harrowby, "were very like those of Burke."

The speech was made in opposition to a bill imposing severe penalities upon weavers who, distracted by immediate misery and having no economic vision, had destroyed the newly invented weaving machines.

In this early period of a success so brilliant that it might have made many a young man arrogant and forgetful, Byron showed himself truly lordly. In 1811 he had returned to England after two years of travel in the Levant. With him he brought the manuscript of the Cantos I and II of "Childe Harold," which he had begun, of all places in the world, in Albania, and the manuscript of "Hints from Horace," which he had written in Greece. So matter-of-fact a cause as the

THE DYING GLADIATOR
("Childe Harold," Canto IV, Stanzas 140 and 141.)

*I see before me the Gladiator lie:*
*He leans upon his hand—his manly brow*
*Consents to death, but conquers agony,*
*And his drooped head sinks gradually low—*
*And through his side the last drops, ebbing slow*
*From the red gash, fall heavy, one by one,*
*Like the first of a thunder-shower; and now*
*The arena swims around him—he is gone,*
*Ere ceased the inhuman shout which hailed the wretch who won.*

failure of remittances from home compelled the return. Such often are the minutiæ that cut steps in fame's pathway.

To Robert Charles Dallas, a kinsman, Byron showed the "Hints from Horace," and Robert Charles Dallas was so good a kinsman that he did not blur with easy speech his statement that he found the satire disappointing.

"Well, then," said Byron, "I have written many stanzas in the Spenserian measure that describe places I have seen during the last two years. A friend who has read them finds little to praise and much to condemn. If you want those rhymes you are welcome to them."

Thus did the manuscript of the first two cantos of "Childe Harold" come under the eyes of Dallas. He was enraptured; he urged immediate publication. Arrangements were made, and Byron was so encouraged that while the poem was going through the press he converted many a passage that was hardly more than a rough draught into the vigorous and highly polished stanzas which the world has been quoting ever since. More than six months passed in this process of an author's simultaneous revision and printing which so maddens printers. That the poet should have imposed the trial on those long-suffering men was characteristic of him.

*He heard it, but he heeded not—*
*his eyes*
*Were with his heart, and that was*
*far away:*
*He recked not of the life he lost*
*nor prize,*
*But where his rude hut by the*
*Danube lay,*
There *were his young barbarians all*
*at play,*
There *was their Dacian mother—*
*he, their sire,*
*Butchered to make a Roman holi-*
*day—*
*All this rushed with his blood—*
*Shall he expire*
*And unavenged?—Arise! Ye Goths,*
*and glut your ire!*

ROME A CENTURY AGO

("Childe Harold," Canto IV, Stanzas 78 and 79.)

*Oh Rome! my country! city of the*
*soul!*
*The orphans of the heart must turn*
*to thee,*
*Lone mother of dead empires! and*
*control*
*In their shut breasts their petty*
*misery.*
*What are our woes and sufferance?*
*Come and see*
*The cypress, hear the owl, and plod*
*your way*
*O'er steps of broken thrones and*
*temples, Ye!*
*Whose agonies are evils of a day—*
*A world is at our feet as fragile as*
*our clay.*

*The Niobe of nations! there she*
*stands,*
*Childless and crownless, in her*
*voiceless woe:*

*An empty urn within her withered hands,*
*Whose holy dust was scattered long ago;*
*The Scipios' tomb contains no ashes now;*
*The very sepulchres lie tenantless*
*Of their heroic dwellers: dost thou flow,*
*Old Tiber! through a marble wilderness?*
*Rise, with thy yellow waves, and mantle her distress.*

He was always imposing suffering upon others.

But to kinsman Dallas he was lordly. Burdened with debt as he was—it is said he owed £10,000 when he came of age and into his title—he nevertheless gave to Dallas the £600 which John Murray, most liberal publisher in the history of the trade, had paid him for Cantos I and II, which ran to 191 nine-line stanzas. Even with their copious notes they would make but a thin volume now.

Not in its original scope but in spirit "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" was momentous.

What was that spirit, and what the young peer's theme?

Taking from the Old French a word which meant "a romance in verse," he had given his poem the subtitle "A Romaunt." But by the time he closed "Childe Harold" in 1818 with the fourth canto, its scope far exceeded the limits of a romaunt. It had become, in spacious measure and in amazingly abundant spirit, a book of travel and history, of politics and satire, of autobiography and epigram, of morose self-examination and pungent characterization of such outstanding figures in the pageantry of human greatness as Horace, Dante, Voltaire, Gibbon, Napoleon, the heroes of antiquity and the heroes of history then in the making. It had become a book of political revolt and

VOLTAIRE AND GIBBON
("Childe Harold," Canto III, Stanzas 105, 106 and 107.)

*Lausanne! and Ferney! ye have been the abodes*
*Of names which unto you bequeathed a name;*
*Mortals, who sought and found, by dangerous roads,*
*A path to perpetuity of fame:*
*They were gigantic minds, and their steep aim*
*Was, Titan-like, on daring doubts to pile*
*Thoughts which should call down thunder, and the flame*
*Of Heaven, again assailed, if Heaven the while*
*On man and man's research could deign do more than smile.*

*The one was fire and fickleness, a child,*
*Most mutable in wishes, but in mind,*
*A wit as various,—gay, grave, sage, or wild,—*
*Historian, bard, philosopher, combined;*
*He multiplied himself among mankind.*

literary allusion; of customs and festivities; a chronicle of tyrannies, rebellions, benefactions. Its range was from the frank and ardent depiction of delights which inflamed the senses to the impassioned plea for human liberty. Since Shakespeare no painter of the high adventure of human existence had crowded so much color into his canvas as Byron crowded into this poem, and since Pope no poet had won to poetry such a multitude of readers as Byron won. To the multitude he made poetry mean rapture, and if the rapture sometimes had its source only in resounding words, the melody, as melody merely, still had power to captivate.

*The Proteus of their talents: But his own*
*Breathed most in ridicule,—which, as the wind,*
*Blew where it listed, laying all things prone,—*
*Now to o'erthrow a fool, and now to shake a throne.*
*The other, deep and slow, exhausting thought,*
*And hiving wisdom with each studious year,*
*In meditation dwelt, with learning wrought,*
*And shaped his weapon with an edge severe,*
*Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer;*
*The lord of irony,—that master-spell,*
*Which stung his foes to wrath, which grew from fear,*
*And doomed him to the zealot's ready Hell,*
*Which answers to all doubts so eloquently well.*

With a pen that seemed now to have been dipped in the pensive blue of twilight on "the castled crag of Drachenfels" and now in the roseate hues of sunset over the Adriatic, he threw upon paper such lines as:

"And chiefless castles breathing stern farewells,
All tenantless, save to the crannying wind."

And—

"I stood in Venice on the Bridge of Sighs;
A palace and a prison on each hand:
I saw from out the waves her structures rise
As from the stroke of the enchanter's wand:
A thousand years their cloudy wings expand
Around me, and a dying Glory smiles
O'er the far times, when many a subject land
Looked to the winged Lion's marble piles,
Where Venice sate in state, throned on her hundred isles.
She looks a sea Cybele, fresh from ocean,
Rising with her tiara of proud towers
At airy distance. . . ."

Epigram he flung about like small coin—"Mammon wins his way where seraphs might despair"—"A thousand years scarce serve to form a state: An hour may lay it in the dust"—"And thus the heart will break, yet brokenly live on"—"Man! thou pendulum betwixt a smile and tear"—"Here all were noble, save Nobility"—"That pride to pampered priesthood dear"—"The Alps, the palaces of Nature"—and "So young, so fair, good without effort, great without a foe." (That last was written of the Princess Charlotte.)

Scott he called "the Ariosto of the North," and, finding the one word of all words, he wrote "the *starry* Galileo."

Byron's finesse in phrase, his boldness and beauty in imagery, and his pungency and precision in epigram were believed by his first readers to be the spontaneous flashings of a youthful mind that was sheer genius. They were not so. His wife, who came to detest him, spoke of him, even in the period of utter disillusion, as "the absolute monarch of words." She, too, accounted him sheer genius. He was more than that. He was a great workman who used the implements of his craft—the words of the English language—with reverence. He subjected vehemence to revision, and with each new year of his life his taste became purer, his self-criticism more severe and his conception of life and duty loftier. His years were few and feverish but as they drew to a close he was drawing nearer and nearer to the deep harbor of the verities. He was almost in port. His untimely death, like the death of Keats and of John Millington Synge, was an irreparable loss to English poetry. Byron, had he had Milton's length of years, might have shared Milton's glory.

# XVI

## ADDISON AND STEELE AND "THE SPECTATOR"

(First published in 555 daily issues in 1711-12 and in 80 thrice a week issues in 1714)

*The talk of Addison and Steele is the brightest and easiest talk that was ever put in print.*

JOHN RICHARD GREEN.

TAKING a leaf out of an ingenious Yankee's book, the writer of these papers hit upon what he thinks is a delightful way to turn "The Spectator" of Addison and Steele—and of some thirty other gentlemen of parts who were occasional contributors to that periodical—into a most engaging breakfast table companion.

It is so much more interesting than turning the delightful volume into a task for your "cultural improvement" that the applier of the idea in question believes it worth communicating.

Oliver Wendell Holmes was born in 1809.

Samuel Johnson was born in 1709.

Of Samuel Johnson there was written—as everybody, whether he has read it or not, has been bludgeoned into conceding—the most entertaining and truthful biography that ever was written about anybody. Nothing, most readers agree, was remotely as good until Froude gave the world his biography of Carlyle, for which the world gave him as long as he lived bitter words, though it pored over the book.

As to the greatest biography ever written, Oliver Wendell Holmes began, early in his life, to read James Boswell's book by a curious system.

"We—Johnson and I," he said, "were born just a century apart. I will follow, each year of my life, the events of his life as recorded by Boswell for the corresponding year of the eighteenth century in order that I may learn, with an interest quickened by sympathy, what Johnson was about in the year of his age to which I then shall have come."

The doctor continued that method of reading Boswell until he was seventy-five years old. Then he had to stop because in that same year of his life the grand old autocrat of eighteenth century England stopped, nevermore to rail, nevermore to do good deeds, nevermore to hold the table spellbound with the best talk that ever adorned the social hour.

So I took a leaf out of our nineteenth century autocrat's book, and thrice within the last thirty years when a March 1 came I took down my fat volume of "The Spectator," placed it within arm's reach of the breakfast table and for the 554 mornings following—Sundays excepted, for no "Spectator" was published on Sunday—had with my morning meal some six to eight minutes of as ingratiating and instructive companionship as any book can give a man not unsociable by nature but having no special craving for human attritions at the breakfast hour.

Not on all of those 555 mornings in the course of the three readings was I faithful to the quiet, happy, sapient page before me. Sometimes the mood was absent, and sometimes, truth to tell, an occasional paper once read could thereafter conscientiously be skipped, for not all of them reach the standard of the best and the better ones. But on the whole I was pretty faithful, for even when a paper dealt with matters quite out-dated now, the charm of a distinguished style was there, the touch of lace, the fragrance of lavender, the elegance of a coterie certainly the most fastidious that has busied itself with English prose. A special merit of the method adapted from Dr. Holmes was its flexibility. If I did not wish to read the "Spectator" for a given weekday of the eighteenth century that corresponded with my weekday in the nineteenth or twentieth, I did not have to, for it was no continued tale of the past that lay before me, but a series of detached papers on a multitude of subjects. So I was pretty faithful, and think it not unlikely that two or three years hence there will come some March 1 when again the old brown volume will be lying within arm's reach of the breakfast table and I shall open the book to "No. 1. Thursday, March 1, 1711"—and shall read once more on the page bearing the date pleasant, courtly words that I know by heart:

"Thus I live in the world rather as a Spectator of mankind than as one of the species, by which means I have made myself a speculative statesman, soldier, merchant, and artisan, without ever meddling with any practical part in life. I am very well versed in the theory of a husband, or a father, and can discern the errors in the economy, business, and diversions of others better than those who are engaged in them; as standers-by discover blots which are apt to escape those who are in the game."

The appeal of the modest scheme lay in the intimacy of it. There was a kind of magic in the date lines of 1711 and 1712 when one matched them, morning after morning, with the date lines of the present; they automatically created a friendliness between the reader and the past which soon grew into intimacy and finally into affectionate curiosity. I derived the most pleasure from my method in the years 1911 and '12, which brought the bi-centenary of "The Spectator," and I would find myself wondering as I opened the volume what great-great-grandfather—whoever he was—had been prompted to ponder upon or worry about or chuckle over by his copy of "The Spectator" precisely two centuries before. Such creatures of dates and recurrences are we, and not unprofitably. Obviously the value of anniversaries, whether they be the intimate ones of the household or the spacious, rubricated ones of history and of letters, is that they stimulate the imagination. And so I came to know the social feel and savor of the twelve years of the reign of Queen Anne better than I knew similar aspects of the eight years of the administration of President Grant. The knowledge was worth while, for those twelve years were important and brilliant. Europe was being reshaped and great literature was being written—Dryden and Defoe and Swift and Pope and Congreve and Addison and Steele, to name only the outstanding writers of that august time—and so that literature was fraught with much instruction and entertainment.

For a writing man—and we are all writing men in the sense that there come times in everybody's life when it is highly important that he express himself clearly and forcibly on paper—reading "The Spectator" is like going to school, a school taught by masters most suave but exacting.

Is not the best style for a public man whose aim is honestly to

persuade the thinking part of his countrymen to honest measures the style of Franklin? Certainly there never was in our annals one more effective.

His style was founded on "The Spectator."

Early in his "Autobiography" Franklin makes acknowledgment of the service the book did him. He does it with detail so abundant that he sets an example easy for any intelligent boy to follow. He is writing of the time when he was between twelve and fifteen years of age:

"About this time I met with an odd volume of 'The Spectator.' It was the third. I had never before seen any of them. I bought it, read it over and over, and was much delighted with it. I thought the writing excellent, and wished, if possible, to imitate it. With this view I took some of the papers and, making short hints of the sentiment in each sentence, laid them by a few days, and then, without looking at the book, tried to complete the papers again, by expressing each hinted sentiment at length, and as fully as it had been expressed before, in any suitable words that should come to hand. Then I compared my 'Spectator' with the original, discovered some of my faults, and corrected them."

Nor was this all. Franklin found that he "wanted a stock of words, or a readiness in recollecting and using them." So he resumed a former practice of making verses, because he was confident that the continual need for words of the same meaning but of different lengths, to suit the measure, or of different sound for the rhyme, would compel him to acquire a rich vocabulary. With him, to think a thing out was to do it. He turned some of the "Spectator" papers into verse, and when, as he says, "I had pretty well forgotten the prose, turned them back again." Then:

"By comparing my work afterwards with the original, I discovered many faults and amended them; but I sometimes had the pleasure of fancying that, in certain particulars of small import, I had been lucky enough to improve the method or the language, and this encouraged me to think I might possibly in time come to be a tolerable English writer, of which I was extremely ambitious."

Thus was formed a style which scholars envy and the untutored understand and enjoy. Hardly any style is less like the style of "The Spectator," which is leisurely, courtly, and graceful,

while Franklin's is pithy, direct, and homely, but in the qualities of clearness, correctness, and the sedate charm which makes for readableness, it is an authentic style and as truly literature as Addison's is.

Thus by nearly sixty years did the boy Franklin anticipate in practice the dictum with which Dr. Johnson closes a masterpiece of brief biography, his life of Addison. He was seventy years old when he wrote it. From boyhood he had spent his life among good books and in his "Lives of the English Poets" he had written one of the best of books. His dictum on Addison's style has therefore had with writing men for nearly a century and a half the weight of a command. It has been often quoted; it cannot be too often heeded:

"What he attempted, he performed; he is never feeble, and he did not wish to be energetic; he is never rapid, and he never stagnates. His sentences have neither studied amplitude nor affected brevity; his periods, though not diligently rounded, are voluble and easy. Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison."

The variety of those volumes is astonishing and their freshness after twenty-one decades is delightful. The little group of publicists, poets, and politicians to whom Addison was model and mentor, and among whom he was by far the most prolific and gifted contributor to "The Spectator," could write about anything from Milton to hens. They could write about anything from Milton to hens *with distinction.* In saying such a thing the lover of "The Spectator" speaks not in far-fetched antithesis but by numbers and dates. The eighteen papers on Milton which appeared on succeeding Saturdays from January 5, 1712, to May 3 made Milton popular in an age to which his epic was almost unknown. In a London which was not as now a reading London and which was a London only a little larger than Buffalo is now, Joseph Addison and his "Spectator" persuaded more than 20,000 men and women mostly of the world of fashion, to read for eighteen consecutive Saturdays essays of 2,000 words each on the puritan poet and his "Paradise."

Circulation managers of metropolitan newspapers will incline to take so popular a contributor seriously, and when I ask them to recall the fact that Messrs. Addison and Steele's daily paper contained on the dates I have mentioned only the essay on Milton and that the proprietors, originally publishing at a penny (2 cents), had the *nerve*—there is no other word, to raise the price to two-pence, then I think they will take Messrs. Addison and Steele seriously indeed.

We must not forget the hens. They came in Spectator No. 120 —Wednesday, July 18, 1711. That paper is packed with facts which every child ought to know but which few town bred children learn. It is extremely interesting. It also is as truly literature as are the eighteen Miltonic criticisms. What makes it so? Is it not the tone—that irresistible Addisonian tone, so lightly yet so pensively fraught with musing, so graced with an amiability that endears alike the writer and the subject to the reader, so ennobled by reverence for the wonders which in the most usual places reward the seeing eye, that as we close the book we say, "Is this a scholar and stylist I have heard or have I been listening for eight minutes to a chicken farmer briefly touched with inspiration?"

## XVII

## THE NEW NOTE "THE SPECTATOR" SOUNDED

"That noble passion, the cement of society," Richard Steele called love in the fourth number of "The Spectator."

This was the new note which the new paper struck.

For half a century—ever since the close of the dismal Cromwellian days, indeed—love, far from being the cement, had been the scandal of that part of English society which was slavishly accepted as "the high world" and "the world of fashion." Gambling and adultery were the favorite indoor sports, and the cuckold, whose distresses seem to have been a well-spring of joy to all onlookers, was the favorite butt of the jester and the dramatist. This was not alone a human tendency which has declared and will continue to declare itself in luxurious societies. It was also an inheritance. Half a century before the two year campaign for decency in English life which "The Spectator" launched in 1711, the throne was ascended by a monarch the most licentious in English annals and as shameless as he was licentious. After twenty-five years of Charles II had come four years of a brother who was licentious and a hypocrite. After James II there were thirteen years of great William, and he was promiscuous. Now [1711] the kingdom was in the ninth year of Anne, and Anne, though she was a faithful wife, was a brandy-drinker, a gross feeder and so deficient in moral force that she could exercise no steadying influence upon a court which was mad over the French language and French fashions and which imitated what was least worthy of imitation in the court of Louis XIV.

It is not to be supposed that a two year campaign, however vigorous and waged by men however gifted, against the domestic and the imported laxities that were corrupting society could either speedily or wholly reform society. But "The Spectator's" was not merely a two-year campaign. It was a campaign which

continued for more than a century and a quarter, and it cannot be said to have culminated until a young woman, as pure as she was stubborn, gave it the favor which the English love—the favor of the royal countenance.

The young woman was Queen Victoria; the year was 1837; Joseph Addison, projector of the campaign, had been 118 years in his grave. Long after he had gone, long after merry, good-hearted, clean-writing Richard Steele had sunk into debt-ridden obscurity in Wales, their "Spectator" carried on their work.

It carried on their work in the form of eight volumes into which the reprinted 555 daily issues of their paper of 1711-12 and the eighty tri-weekly issues of the revived "Spectator" of 1714, had been bound while they still were fresh. Of each volume of the first edition of the reprinted "Spectators" 10,000 copies were promptly sold and the price of a copy was one guinea. That meant no contemptible reading public in point of numbers and taste.

A second edition comprising seven volumes of the collected "Spectators" appeared within a period of two years. It reached a total sale of 70,000 copies at a guinea each. The figures are astounding. Let him who is not impressed by them ask himself what writer or group of writers in this country to-day could in two years take from the public $367,500 for seven volumes of moral, literary and reflective essays.

After the early editions new editions immediately were called for. They have been called for ever since in forms the most splendid and forms the cheapest. In 1921 the Messrs. Scribner published for a dollar a convenient little volume of 343 pages containing fourteen of Addison and Steele's contributions to "The Tatler" ("The Spectator's" immediate predecessor and Steele's own idea and enterprise), seventy of their contributions to "The Spectator," and four of Addison's contributions to "The Freeholder." It is a good lure-book.

And so the campaign went on. It was subtle. It was distinguished by all the attributes of discreet propaganda in that its tone was good-humored, sincere and unoppressive. An erring world was delighted to give ear to moralists who could preach

without prating. Of two of the most gifted publicists who have adorned American journalism it used to be said that Mr. Dana in his New York *Sun* made vice attractive every morning, while Mr. Godkin in his *Evening Post* made virtue odious every afternoon. Joseph Addison erred in neither direction. His taste was so pure, his sense of the ridiculous so exact, that he knew to a nicety the boundaries of the golden mean. He was a mentor without being a prig and he was moral without being sanctimonious. He had little patience with those professors of virtue who encumber their goodness with dismal austerity. In "Spectator" No. 494 he sketched the type in half a score sentences which deserve examination because they are a model of characterization:

"Sombrius is one of those sons of sorrow. He thinks himself obliged in duty to be sad and disconsolate. He looks on a sudden fit of laughter as a breach of his baptismal vow. An innocent jest startles him like blasphemy. Tell him of one who is advanced to a title of honor, he lifts up his hands and eyes; describe a public ceremony, he shakes his head; show him a gay equipage, he blesses himself. All the little ornaments of life are pomps and vanities. Mirth is wanton and wit profane. He is scandalized at youth for being lively, and at childhood for being playful. He sits at a christening, or a marriage feast, as at a funeral; sighs at the conclusion of a merry story, and grows devout when the rest of the company grow pleasant."

While Addison and his colleagues were thus impatient of the cant of virtue, no men wrote with heartier, manlier emphasis of its reality. They determined to make not chastity and clean-speaking ridiculous, as Farquhar and Vanbrugh and Congreve had made them, but to make licentiousness and ribaldry odious. Their policy is defined and redefined throughout "The Spectator." "I have," wrote Addison in No. 445, "new pointed all the batteries of ridicule."

"There is, and ever will be, justice enough in the world to afford patronage and protection for those who endeavor to advance truth and virtue, without regard to the passions and prejudices of any particular cause or faction. If I have any other merit in me, it is that I have new pointed all the batteries of ridicule. They have been generally aimed rather at what is unfashionable than what is vicious. For my own part, I have endeavored to make nothing ridiculous that is not in some measure criminal."

The assertion was not vainglorious. Posterity validated it. One hundred and thirty-one years after it was written Macaulay said of Addison and his "new pointed batteries":

"So effectually, indeed, did he retort on vice the mockery which had recently been directed against virtue, that, since his time, the open violation of decency has always been considered, amongst us, the sure mark of a fool."

The words are from the essay by Macaulay which generous Thackeray described as:

" . . . a magnificent statue of the great writer and moralist of the last age, raised by the love and the marvelous skill and genius of one of the most illustrious artists of our own."

In the new note which "The Spectator" sounded there is naught more interesting or more pleasing to the student of manners than the new attitude which the paper assumed toward women. "The Spectator" could not see why they should remain content with being either the playthings of mankind or the recipients of a condescension so lordly as to madden an intelligent woman. As early as No. 4 Steele frankly sought their suffrages:

"When it is a woman's day, in my work, I shall endeavor at a style and air suitable to their understanding. When I say this, I must be understood to mean, that I shall not lower but exalt the subjects I treat upon. Discourse for their entertainment is not to be debased, but refined. A man may appear learned without talking sentences, as in his ordinary gesture he discovers he can dance, though he does not cut capers. In a word, I shall take it for the greatest glory of my work, if among reasonable women this paper may furnish tea-table talk."

This was the Richard Steele who once said of a woman that "to have loved her was a liberal education," and who in saying it paid what Thackeray called "the finest compliment to a woman that perhaps ever was offered."

The gentlemen of "The Spectator" were sincere and graceful in their sounding of the new note. If your edition of "The Spectator" is an annotated edition—and with the passing of two centuries notes have become essential to an understanding of many an allusion in the papers—you will find in the note on No. 302 a

story which prettily enough proves their sincerity. No. 302 is signed with the letter T, which was one of Steele's ways of signing. But it is known to have been written, at least in part, by the English divine, Dr. Brome. From the resemblance, both in language and cadence, of a passage in it to a dedication which Steele once addressed to his wife, I suspect that Sir Richard may have considerably retouched and amplified Dr. Brome's contribution. It is devoted to a contrast between Honaria, who was witty and beautful, but arbitrary, and Emilia, likewise witty and beautiful, but the recipient of homage rather by deserving than demanding it. The paper closes with these words:

"Ye guardian angels, to whose care heaven has intrusted dear Emilia, guide her still forward in the paths of virtue, defend her from the insolence and wrongs of this undiscerning world: at length, when we must no more converse with such purity on earth, lead her gently hence, innocent and unreprovable, to a better place, where, by an easy transition from what she now is, she may shine forth an angel of light."

Now a passage so fluent in pretty conceits might readily enough be dismissed by a not overcynical reader as a bit of word-mongering in the rapturous vein and a characteristic specimen of Steele's blarney. As a matter of fact, it is founded on fact, and that fact was the great service which Dr. Brome's beautiful wife had done him by giving, amid the temptations which his lusty youth and a large fortune had raised up in his path, the right direction to his life, and by showing him, by her own example, that, as the fond little essay puts it, "virtue is consistent with decent freedoms, or rather that it cannot subsist without them."

The new note of the gentlemen of "The Spectator" did not exhaust itself in pretty words to their pretty wives. They were not smug. They felt, and they uttered, for poor, drab, stumbling ones a compassion which must have struck the rakes of that cynical time as ingenuous.

Aye, let us be virtuous, is Steele's text in No. 266; let us have correct standards of conduct, but let those standards be humane also, and then he begins his vivid little sermon, which is addressed, in part, to the unco' guid:

"No vice or wickedness which people fall into from indulgence to desires which are natural to all ought to place them below the compassion of the virtuous part of the world: which indeed often makes me a little apt to suspect the sincerity of their virtue, who are too warmly provoked at other people's personal sins. The unlawful commerce of the sexes is of all others the hardest to avoid; and yet there is no one which you shall hear the rigider part of womankind speak of with so little mercy. It is very certain that a modest woman cannot abhor the breach of chastity too much; but pray let her hate it for herself, and only pity it in others. Will Honeycomb calls these over-offended ladies the outrageously virtuous."

A few evenings before, while he was "passing along near Covent Garden," Steele had been "jogged on the elbow by a slim young girl of about seventeen," who, "with a pert air," asked him if he were for a pint of wine. Then this picture:

"We stood under one of the arches by twilight; and there I could observe as exact features as I had ever seen, the most agreeable shape, the finest neck and bosom; in a word, the whole person of a woman exquisitely beautiful. She affected to allure me with a forced wantonness in her look and air; but I saw it checked with hunger and cold: her eyes were wan and eager, her dress thin and tawdry, her mien genteel and childish. This strange figure gave me much anguish of heart, and to avoid being seen with her I went away, but could not forbear giving her a crown. The poor thing sighed, curtsied, and with a blessing expressed with the utmost vehemence, turned from me. This creature is what they call 'newly come upon the town,' but who, falling, I suppose into cruel hands, was left in the first month from her dishonor and exposed to pass through the hands and discipline of one of those hags of hell whom we call bawds."

It is often said that prayerful study of "The Spectator" will make a good writer. I know not how that may be, but, when I come upon passages such as the one we just have read, I am sure it would make a true gentleman.

Shall we close the book at a place where the sunshine of Joseph Addison's garden falls across the yellowed page and makes it bright and warm again? Always I have loved the way great-great-grandfather's genial mentor can proportionize—if one so may put it—the new day for the reader four generations removed. I know not how, but somehow this kind of thing (the lines are

from No. 477) seems to start the day right and to put life on a basis sane and sunny:

"There is another circumstance in which I am very particular, or, as my neighbors call me, very whimsical: as my garden invites in it all the birds of the country, by offering them the conveniency of springs and shades, solitudes and shelter, I do not suffer any one to destroy their nests in the spring, or to drive them from their usual haunts in fruit time; I value my garden more for being full of blackbirds than cherries, and very frankly give them fruit for their songs."

## XVIII

## "THE BOOK OF SER MARCO POLO THE VENETIAN CONCERNING THE KINGDOMS AND MARVELS OF THE EAST"

(Composed during the Years 1298 and 1299)

Did ever book begin better!

"Great Princes, Emperors, and Kings, Dukes and Marquises, Counts, Knights, and Burgesses! and People of all degrees who desire to get knowledge of the various races of mankind and of the diversities of the sundry regions of the World, take this Book and cause it to be read to you. For ye shall find therein all kinds of wonderful things, and the divers histories of the Great Hermenia [Armenia], and of Persia, and of the Land of the Tartars, and of India, and of many another country of which our book doth speak, particularly and in regular succession, according to the description of Messer Marco Polo, a wise and noble citizen of Venice, as he saw them with his own eyes. Some things indeed there be therein which he beheld not; but these he heard from men of credit and veracity. And we shall set down things seen as seen, and things heard as heard only, so that no jot of falsehood may mar the truth of our Book, and that all who shall read it or hear it read may put full faith in the truth of all its contents.

"For let me tell you that since our Lord God did mold with his hands our first Father Adam, even until this day, never hath there been Christian, or Pagan, or Tartar, or Indian, or any man of any nation, who in his own person hath had so much knowledge and experience of the divers parts of the World and its Wonders as hath had this Messer Marco! And for that reason he bethought himself that it would be a very great pity did he not cause to be put in writing all the great marvels that he had seen, or on sure information heard of, so that other people who had not these advantages might by his Book, get such knowledge. And I may tell you that in acquiring this knowledge he spent in those various parts of the World good six-and-twenty years. Now, being thereafter an inmate of the Prison at Genoa, he caused Messer Rusticiano of Pisa, who was in the said Prison likewise, to reduce the whole to writing; and this befell in the year 1298 from the birth of Jesus."

That fanfare is the prologue to Marco Polo's book of travels. It is evident that he thought well of himself. His contemporaries did not agree with his estimate, charging him with, among other weaknesses, a chronic tendency to falsehood. Posterity has reversed the verdict.

The exultant prologue was put on paper by a fellow prisoner to whom Marco dictated his book.

Dictated it was, like Cellini's Autobiography, and Milton's "Paradise Lost" and its sequel, and Thackeray's "Henry Esmond," and a great part of Prescott's histories and, like Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," it was composed in a prison.

Six and a quarter centuries have passed. That part of the church in Venice which contained Marco's tomb has vanished, and the Malibran theater occupies the site of the house where Marco lived.

But you can hear him talking still—with the haltings and changes of mind that interrupted the dictation, and the cavalier dismissals of a topic when it bored him.

When Marco is tired he refuses to tire you. In his three-page account of the battle which Kublai Kaan fought with Nayan, I count thrice the true voice of the man finding his way amid his facts. "What," he begins, "shall I tell you about it?" Second paragraph: "And what shall I tell you next?" Fifth paragraph: "But why should I make a long story of it?" Another time he tells us how he faithfully has put in the names of all the seaboard cities of India the Greater—"but of those that lie in the interior I have said nothing, *because that would make too long a story.*"

And again:

"When you leave Locac and sail for 500 miles towards the south, you come to an island called PENTAM, a very wild place. All the wood that grows thereon consists of odoriferous trees. There is no more to say about it; so let us sail about sixty miles further."

Honest, irresistible Marco! Who can withstand such a companion as thou art, and what are six centuries between thee and us!

With the greatest story in the world to tell—that is literally true—Marco could not bear to take up a pen. That, at least,

is the speculation of his foremost translator and commentator, Colonel Henry Yule, who, in considering why Marco dictated, is inclined to ascribe his method of composition to—

> " . . . that intense dislike which is still seen on the shores of the Mediterranean to the use of pen and ink [where, he adds], there is scarcely any inconvenience that the majority of respectable and good-natured people will not tolerate—inconvenience to their neighbors be it understood—rather than put pen to paper for the purpose of preventing it."

Hence we heartily may be grateful to the fortune of war which made Marco a prisoner in the sea fight off Curzola between the Venetians and the Genoese in 1298, and clapped him into a cell with clever, patient, sympathetic Rusticiano from Pisa, who was willing to take his dictation.

Marco, being much badgered and bored by the eager questions of a Genoese gentleman who visited him in prison and wanted to know all about his journey across Asia, sent to his father in Venice for his "notes and memoranda." Then he and Rusticiano set to work.

The result was not alone a book of gorgeous description and sagacious comment but also the greatest "nothing-new-under-the-sun" document in human annals. A distinguished scholar once said, "Whenever I get a new idea I look up and see which Greek author had expressed it best." Marco's book is a good deal like that. You probably think that the individual drinking cup is a twentieth century decency. But when Marco reached what he calls "the great province of Maabar," which is the part of the eastern coast of southern India that we call the Coromandel coast, he found the use of the dainty vessel both compulsory and popular:

> "So also they drink only from drinking vessels, and every man has his own; nor will any one drink from another's vessel. And when they drink they do not put the vessel to the lips, but hold it aloft and let the drink spout into the mouth. No one would on any account touch the vessel with his mouth nor give a stranger drink with it. But if the stranger have no vessel of his own they will pour the drink into his hands and he may thus drink from his hands as from a cup."

Albeit, adds Marco:

"You must know that in all this province of Maabar there is never a Tailor to cut a coat or stitch it, seeing that everybody goes naked! For decency only do they wear a scrap of cloth; and so 'tis with men and women, with rich and poor, aye, with King himself, except what I am going to mention."

The saving exception was a necklace "entirely of precious stones —rubies, sapphires, emeralds, and the like," and a rosary of "104 large pearls and rubies of great price," because "every day, morning and evening, he has to say 104 prayers to his idols."

You may think, too, that an anti-spitting ordinance is relatively modern. But Marco witnessed observance of it in the imperial palace at Peking in the thirteenth century when Kublai Kaan's barons, composing themselves, within half a mile of the palace, to "the greatest meekness and quiet so that no noise of shrill voices or loud talk shall be heard," entered his presence:

"And every one of the chiefs and nobles carries always with him a handsome little vessel to spit in whilst he remains in the Hall of Audience—for no one dares spit on the floor of the hall—and when he hath spitten he covers it up and puts it aside."

Tree planting along the highways—we make earnest but as yet only moderately successful propaganda for that in our country and century. But Kublai Kaan, grandson of Jengis Kaan and one of the dynasty of consummate strategists who brought the Tartar armies out of the mysterious east and to the borders of the Europe of Roger Bacon and Dante and Marco Polo, not only believed in planting trees, as we all do, but *planted* them, so Marco says:

"The Emperor moreover hath taken order that all the highways traveled by his messengers and the people generally should be planted with rows of great trees a few paces apart; and thus these trees are visible a long way off, and no one can miss the way by day or night. Even the roads through uninhabited tracts are thus planted, and it is the greatest possible solace to travelers. The Great Kaan plants these all the more readily, because his astrologers and diviners tell him that he who plants trees lives long.

"Moreover, on the north side of the Palace, about a bow-shot off, there is a hill which has been made by art from the earth dug out of the lake; it is a good hundred paced in height and a mile in compass.

This hill is entirely covered with trees that never lose their leaves, but remain ever green. And I assure you that wherever a beautiful tree may exist, and the Emperor gets news of it, he sends for it and has it transported bodily with all its roots and the earth attached to them, and planted on that hill of his. No matter how big the tree may be, he gets it carried by his elephants; and in this way he has got together the most beautiful collection of trees in all the world. And he has also caused the whole hill to be covered with the ore of azure. which is very green. And thus not only are the trees all green, but the hill itself is all green likewise; and there is nothing to be seen on it that is not green; and hence it is called the GREEN MOUNT; and in good sooth 'tis named well."

Good fathers to their people—scrupulously repaying, for example, the farmers for any cattle killed by a chance arrow in the imperial hunts—and wise administrators though these Tartar chiefs were, there was bitter business, Marco says, when they died:

"Let me tell you a strange thing too. When they are carrying the body of any Emperor to be buried with the others, the convoy that goes with the body doth put to the sword all whom they fall in with on the road, saying: 'Go and wait upon your Lord in the other world!' For they do in sooth believe that all such as they slay in this manner do go to serve their Lord in the other world. They do the same too with horses; for when the Emperor dies, they kill all his best horses, in order that he may have the use of them in the other world, as they believe. And I tell you as a certain truth, that when Mongou Kaan died, more than 20,000 persons who chanced to meet the body on its way, were slain in the manner I have told."

Marco was only seventeen years old when he started with his father, Nicolo, and his uncle, Maffeo, on the twenty-six year Odyssey that was to take him from Constantinople across the whole longtitude of Asia.

The results of what he did were of high importance, for of him a spacious thing may be said:

He enlarged the world.

For his contemporaries, and for many a generation following him, he extended the scope of the liberalizing art of travel. Most momentous service of all, his book fed the divine fire which transmuted the hopes and visions of Columbus into actualities.

That is an epochal story for the details of which it is well worth while to turn to the papers numbered 20 and 21 in the appendix to Irving's "Life of Columbus." "The travels of Marco Polo," says the judicious Irving, "furnish a key to many parts of the voyages and speculations of Columbus, which without it would be hardly comprehensible." Columbus frequently quoted the book. Irving adds, "it was evidently an oracular work with him." The spiritual kinship of the great Genoese with the great Venetian received graceful commemoration half a century ago when the Princess Elena Ghika wrote a little book on Marco. She called it "Marco Polo, Il Cristoforo Colombo dell' Asia."

Other titles the spontaneous homage of nineteen generations of grateful readers has conferred upon him: Malte-Brun called him "the father of geography in Asia" and "the Humboldt of the thirteenth century." Colonel Yule, whose colossal edition ($22, but the whole text of Marco is in the 80 cent Everyman issue) is a monument to the colonel and to Marco, was wont to refer to him as "our medieval Herodotus," and Charles Yriarte, loving historian of Venice, called Marco's book "the most marvelous lyric of the Middle Ages."

Emperor Kublai himself, with a pleasantry that must have sat oddly on that sublime autocrat, affectionately called him "our young bachelor." Charmed by the tact and application of Marco, who, after the four-year journey from Venice, came among the Tartars an upstanding youth of one and twenty, he showered him with riches, honors, and missions. There was a definite reason for these preferments. With Italian shrewdness Marco readily discerned the emperor's ruling passion. It was hunger for information. Coupled with it was a disgust for ambassadors who upon their return from remote provinces over which he ruled could tell him only of official business, whose eyes and ears, save for that business, had been closed.

Marco learned four oriental languages so thoroughly as to be able to speak and write them. Of several more he acquired a speaking knowledge.

The emperor made him an envoy and gave him gorgeous credentials. Thenceforth his hungry soul was fed. After every

mission Marco brought home full notebooks. To the sovereign he told—as he tells us in his book to-day—of the geography, the fauna, the flora, the strange customs and costumes, the natural resources, the architecture, the temples and the feasts, the potentates and the priests of remote and splendid regions.

No desperate peril seems ever to have befallen him. How he escaped torture and death is a mystery to be solved only by reference to his disarming likeableness and naturalness. He carried the surest passport of travelers—a determinaion to be friendly and to be pleased.

The jealousies and intrigues of an oriental court, tropic fevers and desert blizzards, wild beasts and wilder men, perils by land and perils by water—all left him unscathed, and the pretty princess of the imperial house whom, on his final mission, he escorted to her wedding in Persia, "wept for sorrow at the parting" when he and his father and his uncle pushed on toward Trebizond and home. It is one of the sweetest pictures that come down to us from the far reaches of the past. "Moult bele dame et avenant," he calls her in his quaint French—for he dictated his book in French—"and she wept for sorrow at the parting."

The reward of his keen observation as traveler and his vivacity as narrator has been vindication of his claims to truthfulness. Sven Hedin told me that in the course of his extensive Asian journeys he verified point after point in Marco's narrative. "Even his story of the singing sands," said the great Swedish traveler, "is true, although I acknowledge that you must listen sharply with your ears and somewhat with your imagination to catch those mysterious harmonies."

## XIX

## DICKENS' "DAVID COPPERFIELD"

(First published serially in 1849-50; in book form in 1850)

UNFORGETTABLES from "David Copperfield":

*Let us have no meandering.*—Old lady with a hand-basket.

*You'll find us rough, sir, but you'll find us ready.*—Mr. Peggotty.

*"Haven't you* any *children, Mr. Pegotty?"*
*"No, master," he answered with a short laugh. "I'm a bacheldore."*

*I know what I am. I know that I am a lone, lorn creetur, and not only that everythink goes contrairy with me, but that I go contrairy with everybody. Yes, yes. I feel more than other people do, and I show it more. It's my misfortin.*—Mrs. Gummidge.

*Poor thing! She's been thinking of the old un.*—Mr. Peggotty.

*I offered him [Mr. Barkis] a cake as a mark of attention, which he ate at one gulp, exactly like an elephant, and which made no more impression on his big face than it would have done on an elephant's.*—Copperfield.

*Barkis is willin'.*—Mr. Barkis.

*"I do my endeavors in my line of life, sir."*
*"The best of men can do no more, Mr. Peggotty," said Steerforth.*

*When a man says he's willin', it's as much as to say that a man's awaitin' for a answer.*—Mr. Barkis.

*Fashions are like human beings. They come in, nobody knows when, why, or how; and they go out, nobody knows when, why, or how. Everything is like life, in my opinion, if you look at it in that point of view.*—Mr. Omer, the undertaker.

*That he may be ready—in case of anything turning up.*—Mrs. Micawber.

*I never will desert Mr. Micawber. I never will do it. It's of no use asking me.*—Mrs. Micawber.

*Procrastination is the thief of time—collar him.*—Wilkins Micawber.

*Annual income, twenty pounds; annual expenditure, nineteen nineteen six; result, happiness. Annual income, twenty pounds; annual expenditure, twenty pounds ought and six; result, misery. The blossom is blighted,*

*the leaf is withered, the God of day goes down upon the dreary scene, and—and, in short, you are forever floored; as I am!*—Wilkins Micawber.

*In case of anything turning up (of which I am rather confident), I shall be extremely happy if it should be in my power to improve your prospects.* —Wilkins Micawber.

*Janet! Donkeys!*—Betsey Trotwood.

*Ha! Phœbus! How does the world go? I'll tell you what; I shouldn't wish it to be mentioned, but it's a—[here he beckoned to me, and put his lips close to my ear] it's a mad world. Mad as Bedlam, boy!*—Mr. Dick.

*Never be mean in anything; never be false; never be cruel. Avoid those three vices, Trot, and I can always be hopeful of you.*—Betsey Trotwood.

*The twins no longer derive their sustenance from nature's fonts—in short, they are weaned.*—Wilkins Micawber.

*It was as true as turnips is. It was as true as taxes is. And nothing's truer than them.*—Mr. Barkis.

*I am well aware that I am the 'umblest person going, let the other be where he may. My mother is likewise a very 'umble person. My father's former calling was 'umble. He was a sexton.*—Uriah Heep.

*'Orses and dorgs is some men's fancy. They're wittles and drink to me.*—The gentleman with a very unpromising squint.

*I only ask for information.*—Rosa Dartle.

*And I assure you she's the dearest girl.*—Tommy Traddles.

*People can't die, along the coast, except when the tide's pretty nigh out. They can't be born, unless it's pretty nigh in—not properly born, till flood. He's a-going out with the tide.*—Mr. Peggotty.

*And it being low water, he went out with the tide.* [Death of Barkis.]

*But I forgive you. . . . I do, and you can't help yourself.*—Uriah Heep.

*Britannia, that unfortunate female, is always before me, like a trussed fowl; skewered through and through with office-pins, and bound hand and foot with red tape.*—David Copperfield.

*I am sufficiently behind the scenes to know the worth of political life. I am quite an infidel about it, and shall never be converted.*—David Copperfield.

*I'm Gormed—and I can't say no fairer than that.*—Mr. Peggotty.

*I confess I am of Mrs. Waterbrook's opinion. Other things are all very well in their way, but give me Blood!*—Mr. Waterbrook.

*Ain't I volatile?*—Miss Mowcher.

*What a world of gammon and spinnage it is, though, ain't it!*—Miss Mowcher.

Those lines, from "The Personal History of David Copperfield," by Charles Dickens, are printed here not because almost everybody does not know them but because almost everybody, seeing them again, will smile and say, "Oh, yes, I remember, that comes where—," and will put each line back in its right setting of incident or of conversation.

No other prose work of the last three-quarters of a century contains so many phrases, so many bits of characterization and description which the average man of our average English-speaking world so relishingly remembers.

It is in great part the variety and pungency, the raciness and freshness, of these bits of characterization, description, and droll comment that keep "Copperfield" fresh in the minds of average folk. They seem so unlabored, so cheerily strewn along the pages and tossed into the chapters, that we go trustfully and happily along with the unfolding of a story which, were it a current best seller, would appall us by its length. It does not appall us because of the astonishing opulence of scenes and persons. That is why readers who read it at fifteen return to it with delight at fifty. If they have some sense of craftsmanship, their delight is accompanied by wonder. Here seems to be not a series of characters but a population; not a presentation of a group of persons involved in a given set of circumstances but a processional of men, women, and children, laughing, weeping, scowling; some plotting one another's undoing, some painstakingly plotting their own; some blundering into tragedies, some blundering into solutions of their problems, some patiently, sweetly serving best themselves because they serve others. The good, the vicious, the quizzical, the odd, the wise and the foolish, the strong and the weak, the jovial and the grieving, the helpful and the heedless, the fantastic and the sinister, the banned and the blessed, the living who cannot utter themselves and the dead who walk in benediction by the side of those who find difficult the way of life—all, all are here!

It is a world!

Almost all the phases of human existence and human problem

known to average folk are in this book. But life as lived between the covers of the two stout volumes is no longer routine. It is a show, full of sound and movement; full of the unforgettable.

Here are nearly one hundred characters—four times as many as there are in "Hamlet" and five times as many as there are in "Romeo and Juliet." Here are sixty-four long chapters, comprising nearly a thousand pages, that carry David from his birth hour to his middle age of peace of mind and of fame. With him we meet and come to know—with deep and abiding affection, or with loathing, or with casual pleasure or disfavor, just as we meet and know the persons of our own daily comings and goings—all the persons who in any degree gave direction to David's life. We know intimately the doctor who helped bring him into life, and we revere as he did the woman who was the crown of his life, with the apostrophe to whom the story ends:

"O Agnes, O my soul, so may thy face be by me when I close my life, indeed; so may I, when realities are melting from me like the shadows which I now dismiss, still find thee near me, pointing upward!"

Everything about the book is on the colossal scale. The 1910 estimate of the number of copies of works by Dickens printed since the "Pickwick" year of 1837 was 24,000,000. Reducing that to rough annual averages, the sales during the seventeen years which have passed since 1910 must bring the total to nearly 30,000,000. The circulation (in England) of "Copperfield" when it appeared in monthly numbers from May, 1849, to November, 1850, was 25,000 a month. In popularity it ranks next to "Pickwick," but that it is far and away Dickens' best work is generally conceded. That the period of its composition was the happiest time of his feverish life, Dickens himself said.

He was then thirty-seven years old. "Pickwick," "Oliver Twist," "Nicholas Nickleby," "The Old Curiosity Shop," "Barnaby Rudge," the American and Italian travel books, the "Christmas Carol," "Martin Chuzzlewit," and "Dombey and Son" had been written.

"Bleak House," "Hard Times," "Little Dorrit," "A Tale of Two Cities," "Great Expectations," "Our Mutual Friend," and

the fragment, "Edwin Drood," were still to come. The consciousness of a great work done and great work within him was strong in the man, and he wrote "Copperfield" with a confidence in his powers which made for a steadiness, sanity, and poise which he never was to surpass. It was (artistically) his middle period, and it was golden.

From "Pickwick" to "Copperfield" was a period of twelve years; from "Copperfield" to his death was twenty-one years.

The writer of these sketches of good reading has not many envies, for he has found life so exhilarating an exhibition to look on at that he has found little time to peer around for joys to begrudge the other spectators, but he does envy the boy who has before him the first reading of "David Copperfield." What a world it will take him into, what scenes, what people, what experiences, what forthright goodness, what comicalities, what tenderness! William De Morgan, the English novelist who shared with Dickens his supreme attribute—his humanity—once put the thought in a defter way. He said:

> "If I were dying and were suddenly told that an unsuspected posthumous work of Charles Dickens had come to light and was in the printer's hands, I firmly believe that I should wish to go on dying long enough to read it."

Mr. De Morgan used to challenge his friends to reread the narrative of David's meeting with Dora Spenlow in the conservatory and not "feel proud of having kept their eyes dry," of "having suppressed something almost like a sob." He said fiction "contained no passage more spontaneously pathetic." Spontaneously is an important word there, for Dickens' pathos was often extremely calculated. Hence much of it palls on maturity and is bad for young people.

One matter in especial it is right to urge upon our young people when we take "Copperfield" to them. That matter is the goodly reading it will lead them into. The youthful David is the youthful Charles, a fact Dickens imparted to Forster. Wilkins Micawber is John Dickens, Charles' father. His mother, although she was drawn at full length in Mrs. Nickleby, is also sketched in some of her aspects in Mrs. Micawber. The whole pitiful episode of

David's life as bottle washer in the wine establishment is the story of the boy Dickens' life as wrapper and paster in a blacking factory. The actual episode is related in an autobiographical fragment which Dickens wrote and which Forster incorporated with his life of the novelist.

Every boy of parts who reads "Copperfield" will turn eagerly to the score of affecting pages in Forster (simpler than anything in the novel) where Dickens tells the true story of his hard but uncorrupted boyhood. And having devoured it, our boy will read on and on, and he will come into the fullness of one of the most fruitful careers in the annals of letters.

Thence he will turn in connection with his reading of "Ivanhoe" —for the taste for literary biography soon becomes a passion—to another great biography in our language, John Gibson Lockhart's life of Scott. Then he is safe, and he will tackle unafraid the best biography—for such the world has agreed that it is—in any language, James Boswell's life of Johnson. Reading those three books, our boy will have acquired a knowledge most intimate and comprehensive of English letters and English thought and customs and problems from the seventh year of the reign of Queen Anne to the thirty-third year of the reign of Victoria—161 years—and of the brilliant history-making, book-writing men who surrounded the heroes of those three great biographies.

To end on "Copperfield"—I think the tenderest, perhaps the truest, thing ever said of the author of the book was said by the present Bishop of London when he presided at the Dickens centenary banquet given in London in 1912:

"Dickens' way of interesting people helped him immensely to find an interest in those people. Ah, if we only had his insight we, too, would find something to care for, to love and to pity in every human being that lives."

## XX

## GOETHE'S "FAUST"

### (Composed during the Six Decades between 1772 and 1831)

*Many a youth who is paralyzed by coming gradually or suddenly to perceive that he possesses merely an empirical grasp upon the problem of his own life might have been spared this most bitter experience had Goethe been his schoolmaster.*

JAMES TAFT HATFIELD.

*I held it truth, with him who sings*
*To one clear harp in divers tones,*
*That men may rise on stepping stones*
*Of their dead selves to higher things.*

("In Memoriam," Canto I.) TENNYSON.

THERE, in that opening stanza of the first canto of "In Memoriam," is your key to the outer works of the "Faust" fortress.

That it is the key is no unsupported assertion, for Lord Tennyson, not long before he died, informed an American gentleman that he had Goethe and "Faust" in mind when he wrote of "him who sings to one clear harp in divers tones."

And now another key—nothing more difficult, nothing more abstruse or recondite than the ancient words:

"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

This colossal work, vast though its proportions are, mysterious and mystical as many of its passages are, is not then a work to make us newcomers into the high altitudes of literature turn abashed away.

Not to be envied is the man who never has exercised his soul amid the profound abysses and the shining peaks of this book, which is like no other in literature and which attempts more

than any other book of single authorship ever attempted. And yet one feels almost sorry for the novice in the early stages of his study of "Faust." It is no week's reading. With many changes of mood—with wonder, bewilderment, delight, and sometimes with vexation, disgust and disillusion—he will falter over many a page. There is many a chance that he will abandon the book, for, revealing and sustaining as it is, it also is unmanageable, spasmodic, chaotic; now chiseled into marvelous splendor and dignity, now seeming tossed together to make jingles and doggerel.

But, if he persevere and if he attempt not too much at a sitting, it will envelop him at last, and then he will ever return to it, finding, as men for a hundred years have been finding, new-meanings and no-meanings, but sometimes, even in the no-meanings, sublime intimations; finding, too, a philosophy of good and evil that will help him toward reconciliation with the eternal mystery of pain and failure and wrong.

What, then, is the theme?

Human life—its yearnings and its struggles to satisfy those yearnings, its strength in the struggle and its weakness. How sometimes we are in some part noble; how we are in the most momentous matters of human conduct and human relationships very imperfect; how the best of men is a creature of mixed motives, but how those motives through struggle and pain become purified; how, in short, we suffer and make others suffer and to what end this comes to pass—such, in some of its phases, is this mighty theme.

Difficult this drama is, but the steadying fact for the groping reader is that it is rock-bottomed on certain large elementals. Goethe, with the simplicity and forthrightness that give to many of his utterances the antique gnomic quality, defined some of those elementals—fundamentals—of the edifice of "Faust." Let us listen to him:

"Wer nicht für andre thut, thut nichts für sich."

All words of one syllable but one, and only nine of them. Coupled with this fundamental that he who does nothing for

others does, by that very token, nothing for himself is another note far newer when Goethe, looking out in 1773 over a disheartened and stagnant Europe, began to formulate "Faust" than it is now.

That note was a bold negation. "All," he said, and kept on saying throughout his long, fruitful life, "is *not* vanity." You find that in the collection of his sayings published in cheap, convenient form under the title of "Maxims of Goethe," one of the most precious books ever put together. You find it in his approach to that "awful problem of evil" which is the main theme of "Faust," and in his attempt at a solution of the problem. For his position is that so long as man is a striving creature he must, by the limitation of his endowments, be an erring creature. In the play, he said that in eight words, again all of one syllable—

*"Es irrt der Mensch, so lang er strebt."*

Bayard Taylor, probably the best and certainly the most loving of the translators of "Faust" into English, required eleven words to get that into English, and one of them is a word of four syllables.

As early as when Goethe was twenty-one years old, in the buoyant, boyish oration on Shakespeare, of whom he said, "I am ashamed of myself in Shakespeare's presence," as early as that, he had gripped to himself the central idea of "Faust," a work to which he was not to put the last touch for sixty years. That idea was:

"That which we call evil is only the reverse side of good, and is as necessary to its existence and to the tout ensemble as it is that the hot zone must burn and Lapland must freeze in order that there may be a temperate zone."

With conviction, with rapture, with Gothic variety of ornament he wrought out that central idea, not only insisting that all we live and suffer and enjoy is *not* vanity but also declaring that hope is "the second soul of the unhappy" and that man's infinite aspiration is "the glimmering of heaven's light which man calls reason."

Steadying anchors, those sentences, for man feeling his way over seas which every man must, more or less, chart for himself—the dark tumultuous seas of his life and his destiny!

Endowed with that infinite aspiration but with only finite ca-

pacity man cannot but err. Goethe lets Mephistopheles say that man uses this reason of his, this "glimmering of heaven's light," to be "the most brutal of brutes," but the burden of heaven's message to man, as Goethe interprets it, is that man is struggling to satisfy the divine, the infinite, aspiration in him. Struggling he will err, but in the fact and by the fact of that struggle, carried on and on and on, ever higher, ever less for self and more for others, unhastening but unresting, is his salvation.

That is the Err-Theme of "Faust," and because of it Part II of the poem, which most persons ignore and which the stage—except very infrequently in Germany—always ignores, is essential to a symmetrical comprehension of Goethe's thought.

But to a specimen of his thought.

What do most of us find ourselves musing more and more seriously upon as we grow older? Upon God—whether we wish to or not; upon the idea of God. Let us open this book and follow one of the most wistful, plaintive, and profound scenes in it. It is the scene in which Margaret, with that solicitude which is at once so timid and bold in loving women, questions her beloved about his idea of God. Is he right? Is he safe? Faust answers her at first with the fond cajoleries with which ardent, confident young men—for Henry is young now—are wont to put such questioning aside. Then he becomes grave and utters an idea of God which for solemnity, reverence, and a worshiping agnosticism is not to be paralleled in literature or dogma. How simply the scene begins, how gravely it proceeds, how profoundly it closes! Follow it quietly. You are listening to two hearts:

MARGARET

Promise me, Henry!—

FAUST

What I can!

MARGARET

How is't with thy religion, pray?
Thou art a dear, good-hearted man,
And yet, I think, dost not incline that way.

FAUST

Leave that, my child! Thou know'st my love is tender;
For love, my blood and life would I surrender,
And as for Faith and Church, I grant to each his own.

MARGARET

That's not enough; we must believe thereon.

FAUST

Must we?

MARGARET

Would that I had some influence!
Then, too, thou honorest not the
Holy Sacraments.

FAUST

I honor them.

MARGARET

Desiring no possession.
'Tis long since thou hast been to
mass or to confession.
Believest thou in God?

FAUST

My darling, who shall dare
"I believe in God!" to say?
Ask priest or sage the answer to
declare,
And it will seem a mocking play,
A sarcasm on the asker.

MARGARET

Then thou believest not!

FAUST

Hear me not falsely, sweetest
countenance!
Who dare express Him?
And who profess Him,
Saying: I believe in Him!
Who, feeling, seeing,
Deny His being,
Saying: I believe Him not!
The All-enfolding,
The All-upholding,
Folds and upholds He not
Thee, me, Himself?
Arches not there the sky above
us?
Lies not beneath us, firm, the
earth?
And rise not, on us shining,
Friendly, the everlasting stars?
Look I not, eye to eye, on thee,
And feel'st not, thronging
To head and heart, the force,
Still weaving its eternal secret,
Invisible, visible, round thy life?
Vast as it is, fill with that force
thy heart,
And when thou in the feeling
wholly blessed art,
Call it, then, what thou wilt,—
Call it Bliss! Heart! Love! God!
I have no name to give it!
Feeling is all in all:
The Name is sound and smoke,
Obscuring Heaven's clear glow.

MARGARET

All that is fine and good, to hear
it so:
Much the same way the preacher
spoke,
Only with slightly different
phrases.

FAUST

The same thing, in all places,
All hearts that beat beneath the
heavenly day—
Each in its language—say;
Then why not I, in mine, as well?

MARGARET

To hear it thus, it may seem pass-
able;
And yet, some hitch in't there
must be,
For thou hast no Christianity.

FAUST

Dear love!

In his youthful pride, in his doubts and his self-love and selfishness, in his remorse and his strivings, in his disillusions and discouragements, in his roysterings and seductions and satieties, in his vast learning, and in his patient experimentation which, we know now, gave to mankind foretokens of the discoveries of Darwin and the theories of Spencer, in the service of his middle life, in his regrets, and in the serenity of his Olympian old age—in all that—Goethe was Faust and Faust was, and remains, aspiring mankind.

All that he had lived, thought, suffered, enjoyed, learned, all the wrong he had done Frederica and the other trustful ones, all the good he had effected, all his scorns, all his wrath and his calm, all the grotesqueries of his lively fancy and all the sublimities of his far vision he flung into this drama. And so I like to think of it in the light of two radiant pictures. The first comes down to us from the hand of Goethe's mother—her picture of her son on a winter's day on the frozen Main where it moves by the ancient, imperial city of Frankfort:

"There skated my son, like an arrow, among the groups. The wind had reddened his cheeks and blown the powder out of his hair. When he saw my cloak of crimson and fur, which had a long train and was closed in front by golden clasps, he came toward our carriage and smiled coaxingly at me. I took it off; he put it on, threw the train over his arm, and away he went over the ice like a son of the gods. I clapped my hands for joy. Never shall I forget him as he darted out from under one arch of the bridge and in again under another, the wind carrying the train behind him as he flew."

Sixty years pass.

That radiant being is more than eighty now, but the years are a crown, not a burden. The old man is climbing a hill above Ilmeneau's mines, to a woodland hut where he had been wont to revel and to sing long time before. His eyes rest upon some verses he had written on the wall in the days of his youth. The German of them is here printed alongside Mr. Longfellow's faithful, simple translation—the sole truly simple one of the four or five I know—because I want you to get the feel of them in double measure:

EVENING.

O'er all the hilltops
Is quiet now,
In all the treetops
Hearest thou
Hardly a breath;
The birds are asleep in the trees;
Wait; soon like these
Thou, too, shalt rest.

EIN GLEICHES.

Ueber allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh,
In allen Wipfeln
Spürest du
Kaum einen Hauch:
Die Vögelein schweigen in Walde.
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch.

The old man reads them slowly as he stands on the Gickelhahn. The tears are running down his cheeks. He looks out over the dark pines and softly repeats the closing words:

*"Warte nur, balde ruhest du auch."*

"Come," he says, turning to Mahr, "come! Now we will go down again."

In less than a year he closed his eyes forever. But he died with those eyes to the sun, and his last words were, "More light!"

He is the eagle of literature.

# XXI

## IZAAK WALTON'S "THE COMPLETE ANGLER, OR THE CONTEMPLATIVE MAN'S RECREATION"

(First published in 1653)

### *SOME OF THE "CHOICELY GOOD"—IN WALTON'S PHRASE—FROM "THE COMPLETE ANGLER"*

*A good, honest, wholesome, hungry breakfast.*

*Good company and good discourse are the very sinews of virtue.*

*And for winter fly fishing—it is as useful as an almanac out of date.*

*I tell you, scholar, fishing is an art, or at least it is an art to catch fish.*

*I remember that a wise friend of mine did usually say, "That which is everybody's business is nobody's business."*

*I will tell you, scholar, I have heard a grave divine say that God has two dwellings, one in heaven and the other in a meek and thankful heart.*

*As for money, neglect it not: but note, that there is no necessity of being rich: for I told you there be as many miseries beyond riches as on this side them.*

*I would you were a brother of the angle, for a companion that is cheerful, and free from swearing and scurrilous discourse, is worth gold; I love such mirth as does not make friends ashamed to look upon one another next morning.*

*We may say of angling as Dr. Boteler [we spell it Butler now] said of strawberries: "Doubtless God could have made a better berry, but doubtless God never did"; and so, if I might be judge, God never did make a more calm, quiet, innocent recreation than angling.*

*Come, let's to supper. Come, my friend Coridon, this Trout looks lovely, it was twenty-two inches when it was taken, and the belly of it looked some part of it as yellow as a marigold, and part of it is as white as a lily, and yet, methinks, it looks better in this good sauce.*

*I knew a man that had health and riches, and several houses, all beautiful, and ready-furnished, and would often trouble himself and family to be removing from one house to another; and being asked by a friend, Why*

*he removed so often from one house to another? replied, "It was to find content in some one of them." But his friend, knowing his temper, told him, If he would find content in any of his houses, he must leave himself behind him; for content will never dwell but in a meek and quiet soul.*

IZAAK WALTON.

ONE day Dean Stanley was guiding Mary Anderson among the storied memorials of Westminster Abbey. It must have been nearly half a century ago, for Galatea was in the glory of her youth and beauty then. The old man paused in the south transept before the mural tablet to the learned and prolific Isaac Casaubon —Casaubon the elder, who was professor of Greek at twenty-three and father of twenty children at fifty-five—and said he would show her the only piece of vandalism in the abbey that he was ever disposed to forgive. Then he laid his beautiful fingers in a caressing way upon a part of the tablet where had been scratched, evidently with a nail, the characters I. W. 1658.

Reading very late one night in a book about Izaak Walton, the dean had come upon a letter in which the author of "The Complete Angler" confessed that he had done this thing—at the age of sixty-five, too, when he was old enough to know better. (It was probably the only mischief he did in his long and beneficent life.) But Dean Stanley was so excited and pleased that he seized a candle and hurried from the deanery into the dark abbey. He forgave all, for, like all men of parts, he loved Walton, and was only eager to verify the confession. There amid the shadows and the tombs and the silence he did verify it, and long afterwards he permitted Laurence Hutton to make a rubbing of the I. W. 1658, which was strictly against the rules by dean and chapter made and provided.

A story, said Mr. Bryan, is worth telling only when it emphasizes something that is better than itself, and I think this story of gentle Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, seeking by candlelight in that vast and solemn gloom the memento sweet Izaak Walton had left more than two centuries before, is that kind of a story.

For it is so that they who know his book have ever loved Walton —with the manly *tendresse*, the delicate sense of intimacy which is the fine flower of friendship.

If everybody could be persuaded to make Walton's little book —"The Complete Angler" runs to less than 200 pages—a life possession this would be a quieter, sweeter, friendlier, but not less utile, world. Methought that sentence, when it sketched itself out of musing, was compact and sapient enough to serve for the first sentence of a little paper about the beloved fisherman. But, turning over one of the pleasantest books in the world—Charles Lamb's letters—I found that Elia had said the thing a hundred times better. "Among all your readings," he wrote in a letter to Coleridge, "did you ever light upon Walton's 'Complete Angler'? . . . It breathes the very spirit of innocence, purity, and simplicity of heart." . . . And then this, which is the incomparable sentence: *"It would christianize every discordant, angry passion"*—and he added, "Pray, make yourself acquainted with it."

Izaak Walton turned the technique of a sport into literature.

Hark musingly, as one sitting at a brookside does, to the purling music that comes in Chapter IV, when Piscator (Walton) and his new friend Venator (the hunter reformed) are faring toward an inn at the close of the third day's fishing and talking and singing:

"But turn out of the way a little, good scholar, towards yonder high honeysuckle hedge; there we'll sit and sing, whilst this shower falls so gently upon the teeming earth, and gives yet a sweeter smell to the lovely flowers that adorn these verdant meadows. Look, under that broad beech-tree, I sat down, when I was last this way a-fishing, and the birds in the adjoining grove seemed to have a friendly contention with an echo, whose dead voice seemed to live in a hollow tree, near to the brow of that primrose-hill; there I sat viewing the silver streams glide silently towards their center, the tempestuous sea; . . . and sometimes I beguiled time by viewing the harmless lambs, some leaping securely in the cool shade, whilst others sported themselves in the cheerful sun; and saw others craving comfort from the swollen udders of their bleating dams. As I thus sat, these and other sights had so fully possessed my soul with content, that I thought, as the poet has happily expressed it,

> 'I was for that time lifted above earth;
> And possessed joys not promis'd in my birth.'"

Here is the passage that leads into the longer passage of prose and verse—too long to more than caress here—the famous one wherein Piscator and Venator meet with Maudlin, the milkmaid,

and her mother, and hear from them "that smooth song which was made by Kit Marlow now at least fifty years ago," and the answer to it "which was made by Sir Walter Raleigh in his younger days."

"They were old fashioned poetry," says Walton, "but choicely good, I think much better than the strong lines that are now in fashion in this critical age." And the milkmaid—she was choicely good, too:

" . . . 'twas a handsome milkmaid, that had not yet attained so much age and wisdom as to load her mind with any fears of many things that will never be, as too many men too often do; but she cast away all care, and sung like a nightingale. 'She and I' [her mother said], 'both love all anglers, they be such honest, civil, quiet men. . . . Come, Maudlin, sing the first part to the gentlemen with a merry heart.' "

Those four or five pages of Chapter IV are Walton in his best sustained manner, and old Miss Mitford used to say that Maudlin, with her lack of fear of "many things that will never be," was own sister to Sir Philip Sydney's shepherd's boy in the "Arcadia," who was "piping as though he should never be old." That passage, too, is one of the treasures of English prose and worthy to be read with Walton's best, just as Walton's book itself is worthy to make one in a great trilogy of prose books of out of doors description and meditation. The first, to my thinking, is Thoreau's "Walden," the second "The Complete Angler," the third Gilbert White's "Selborne"; "Walden" strengthens; "Selborne" opens the eyes, and the "Angler"—ah, it sweetens. A smiling book all the way, and it persuades to smiling.

For the sheer pleasure of it, I must gather you another handful of Izaak's gentle, deathless phrases:

"The Great Secretary of Nature—Sir Francis Bacon."

Was more ever pressed into eight words! That is not in the "Angler," but in Walton's little life of holy George Herbert. In the same book, speaking of Herbert and Dr. Donne as hymnologists, he refers to certain lost hymns, and says:

"These hymns are now lost to us, but doubtless they were such as they two now sing in heaven."

Another time he is describing the song of the nightingale—the music "out of her little instrumental throat," and he seems himself to burst into song:

"Lord what music hast Thou provided for the saints in heaven, when Thou affordest bad men such music on earth."

This one he wrote in a copy of Dr. Sibbe's "Returning Backslider":

"Of this blest man let this just praise be given,
Heaven was in him before he was in heaven."

Of Dr. Nowel, whom parliament in the time of Elizabeth enjoined to make a catechism for public use, he says in the "Angler":

"And the good old man, though he was very learned, yet knowing that God leads us not to heaven by many nor by hard questions, like an honest Angler, made that good, plain, unperplexed catechism, which is printed with our good old Service-book."

But amid all his musing, Walton never maunders. No man was fuller of facts and few have known how to make facts so engaging. Somehow there is a touch of something ingratiating—a certain "manner" to the telling—in this:

"Let me tell you, that camphire put with moss into your worm-bag with your worms, makes them, if many anglers be not very much mistaken, a tempting bait, and the angler more fortunate."

Even his recipes are literature, as the alluring directions in Chapter III for cooking a chub, or the more savory ones anent the pike that close Chapter VIII. Finishing them, you are ready to say with him, "This dish is too good for any but anglers, or very honest men." (I prize that comma.)

Walton loved good talk, good manners, good eating, a good song, and good books—in the "Angler" alone he refers to sixty-seven books—and by the geniality of his nature, the acuteness of his observation, and the grace of his style, he has left us a living, speaking picture of the converse, the manners, the eating, the favorite songs, and favorite books of the sedate but hearty gentry and clergy of royalist sympathies who, in the austere decade of the Protectorate, sought surcease from contention in the placidest of

recreations. His book was a soft, cool, sweet oasis in a troubled time. Such it remains into our time—a pleasant place of refreshment on the way and race of life. It remains, too, what it was in his lifetime, a veritable best seller. He wrote the "Angler" at the age of sixty. Before he died in his ninety-first year five editions had been issued. Since then more than a hundred have appeared, and one of the very best of them is American, edited by Bethune, a clergyman. An excellent cheap edition with a good introduction was published by the Brentanos in 1901 in their series of "Sportsman's Classics."

Samuel Johnson put the "Angler" into a list of thirty essential books he made out for a young friend, and Boswell tells us that Walton's "Lives" was one of the doctor's "most favorite books."

Wordsworth wrote two exquisite sonnets on Walton, and Washington Irving so loved him that he made a pilgrimage with his brother Peter to his rustic haunts. Landor introduced him into that soul-delighting book, the "Imaginary Conversations." Hallam could not praise him too highly, and Lowell and Donald Grant Mitchell wrote pleasant essays about him.

The old man lived in five reigns. When he was born, Shakespeare still had twenty-two years to live; when he died, Addison was a lad of eleven. Like his life and his books, his portrait is endearing—a kind, open, friendly, placid yet sensitive countenance that smiles at you with the eyes, a little whimsically. He sleeps in the south transept of Winchester cathedral. In the glorious nave—the longest but one in Europe—Jane Austen is buried.

Two of the kindest, wittiest, quietest, pleasantest persons that ever put pen to paper have that noble fane to shield them from the bustling of a contentious world.

## XXII

## "THE BOOK OF THE THOUSAND NIGHTS AND ONE NIGHT"; ALSO CALLED "THE ARABIAN NIGHTS' ENTERTAINMENTS"

(These stories were collected from ancient sources, and composed in their present form, probably in Cairo, during a period between 1450 and 1500)

*DO YOU REMEMBER 'WAY BACK WHEN—*

*The country boy at the district school is introduced into a wider world than he knew at home, in many ways. Some big boy brings to school a copy of the "Arabian Nights," a dog-eared copy, with cover, title-page, and the last leaves missing, which is passed around, and slyly read under the desk, and perhaps comes to the little boy whose parents disapprove of novel-reading, and have no work of fiction in the house except a pious fraud called "Six Months in a Convent" and the latest comic almanac. The boy's eyes dilate as he steals some of the treasures out of the wondrous pages, and he longs to lose himself in the land of enchantment open before him. He tells at home that he has seen the most wonderful book that ever was, and a big boy had promised to lend it to him. "Is it a true book, John?" asks the grandmother; "because, if it isn't true, it is the worst thing that a boy can read." (This happened years ago.) John cannot answer as to the truth of the book, and so does not bring it home; but he borrows it, nevertheless, and conceals it in the barn, and lying in the hay-mow is lost in its enchantments many an odd hour when he is supposed to be doing chores. There were no chores in the "Arabian Nights"; the boy there had but to rub the ring and summon a genius, who would feed the calves and pick up chips and bring in wood in a minute. It was through this emblazoned portal that the boy walked into the world of books, which, he soon found, was larger than his own, and filled with people he longed to know.*

("Being a Boy," Chapter VII. 1877.) CHARLES DUDLEY WARNER.

ENGAGING paradox! The younger men are and the older they are the more they like the book of tales commonly called "The Arabian Nights."

The very young enjoy it; the very old appreciate it. There is a distinction. The very young enjoy it without a care or a preoccupation because for them the book is an unweariedly spontaneous narrative, endlessly, musically purling along. The old—and I mean those who are aged with the seniority of rich years fed on nutritious books—appreciate it because behind the effect of spontaneity they perceive the delicate art which creates the effect. They feel the soft but decisive stroke with which every word is made to tell. They bask in and are warmed and thrilled by pages rich with ornament but still uncluttered; pages fragrant with perfumes but still unoppressive. Thus enjoying, they wonder, since untaught tale-tellers in the market place were the originators of such witcheries of style, whether the art of writing can ever be taught. Possibly it can, they decide, by the reading and rereading and prayerful examination of books which are works of art.

They come on a passage like this, and they mark the easy glide of it and the savors and colors packed into it like goodly things to eat into a box, and such felicities of phrase as "heart-delighting voices," and so marking they, like Sinbad, "marvel in themselves" and are "moved to great delight," albeit their delight is tempered with despair, for how shall a man learn to write in this style so swift, so easy, so opulent withal? The passage is here given in the English of John Payne's exact translation and it follows his spelling of the oriental names and titles:

"There lived in the city of Bagdad, in the reign of the Khalif Haroun er Reschid, a porter named Sinbad, a poor man who carried [burdens] on his head for hire. One day of heat he was carrying a heavy load and, what with the heat and the burden, he became exceedingly weary and sweated amain. Presently he came to the gate of a merchant's house, before which the ground was swept and watered, and there the air was temperate. There was a wide bench beside the door; so he set his load thereon, to rest and take breath, and there came out upon him from the porch a pleasant breeze and a delicious fragrance. He sat down on the edge of the bench, to enjoy this, and heard from within the melodious sound of lutes and other stringed instruments and heart-delighting voices singing and reciting all manner of verses with clear and goodly speech, together with the song of birds warbling and glorifying God the Most High in various voices and tongues,

turtles and mocking-birds and merles and nightingales and cushats and curlews, whereat he marveled in himself and was moved to great delight."

On the easy current of such a style you are borne by "The Arabian Nights" into a thousand byways, intimacies, customs, fancies and origins of oriental life and thought.

Do you know whence comes the word, "alcohol." Neither did I. But in the ninth volume of John Payne's translation of "The Arabian Nights"—the same Payne who translated François Villon—you find the tale of "Marouf the Cobbler and His Wife Fatima," and on page 224 comes the line of verse, woven into the tale:

*"How many a loveling among them, eye-painted with languor, abode."*

In one of his valuable and numerous but not too numerous notes, John Payne says that the precise literal of that wonderful "eye-painted with languor" would be:

" . . . koholed with languor or voluptuous grace, *i.e.*, naturally possessing that liquid languorous softness which it is the aim of the use of kohl to simulate."

That prompted me to look up "kohl." The Webster said that it was a preparation "as of soot and other ingredients, used by Egyptian and other eastern women to darken the edges of the eyelids," and that this "al-kohl," as it is called in Arabic, was so fine in grain that the word came to be applied to highly rectified spirits, though not so applied in Arabia.

But we were talking of old men.

One of the best Carlyle stories concerns the time the old man was talking to Norton of Harvard about his boyhood, and he recalled days when books were few among his Scotch farmer folk:

" . . . but somehow when my grandfather was well on in years a stray copy of Anson's 'Voyages' drifted into his hands, and a friend of his would come over in the evenin' and the two old men wad read the book aloud to each other. And after that there came the 'Arabian Nights' (which has given me more pleasure in my lifetime than any other) and night after night the old men sat readin' it, and one night my father, who had listened to some o' their readin', felt called upon

to utter his protest, and he said, 'It made him wonder to see two old men who had a great respect for truth amusin' themselves with what was a mere collection o' improbabilities an' falsehoods' . . . he was a verra pious and dutiful son, . . . but ye may believe he was never again permitted to take part in those delightful readings."

In the old grandfather who knew great writing when he saw it was the immediate literary ancestor of the Thomas Carlyle who was to attain such command of words, and of the color in them, that he could make the intricate politics of the French Revolution as entertaining as a tale out of that "Arabian Nights" which had given him "more pleasure in his lifetime than any other book."

Carlyle's "verra pious" father to the contrary, there is amid the languors and voluptuosities of "The Arabian Nights" a good deal of stalwart piety. Refresh by turning to the fifth volume and the thirty-second page of Payne, whereon begins the short tale of "The Muslim Champion and the Christian Damsel." How ingratiatingly it begins, and how savory is the use of the good but now little used adjective, "strait," that St. Matthew used when he wished to say that the gate was narrow, but which here is used in its shading of "close":

"The Khalif Omar Ben el Khettab (whom God accept) once levied an army of Muslims, to encounter the enemy before Damascus, and they laid strait siege to one of the Christians' strengths."

There follows capture of the young Muslim, and his betrothal to a Christian maid, and a journey whereon they heard clank of arms and ring of bridles, and men's voices and tramp of horse. It is a plight, and the bride tells her husband to pray now if ever, and pray hard:

"So they betook themselves to prayer and supplication to God the Most High and he recited these verses:

*" 'Indeed, I stand in need of Thee all seasons, foul or fair*
*What though with diadem and crown my brows encompassed were.*
*Thou art the chiefest of my wants, and could my hand but win*
*This its desire, no other want were left to me whate'er.*
*Nought that Thou hast withholdest Thou; the outflow of Thy grace*
*Is as a torrent or a shower, that's lavished everywhere.*

*By my transgression am I shut therefrom, yet is the light*
*Of Thy compassion, Clement One, resplendent past compare.*
*O Care-Dispeller, that, wherewith I stricken am, dispel;*
*For there is none save Thou alone can do away this care.'"*

That prayer is as valid and reverent this day as it was four hundred years ago when "The Arabian Nights" was the best selling narrative to be heard in the palaces and market places of the gorgeous East.

As for the bride and the bridegroom, their adventurous wedding journey came to a happy conclusion and their whole life thereafter was happy. The lovely last two lines of the tale so assure you:

"And they ceased not to be in all delight and solace of life, till there came to them the Destroyer of Delights and the Sunderer of Companies."

The names of the first tellers of these tales, precisely where and when the tales originated, and the names of the man or men who first put them into writing—nobody knows. There is a Persian collection of stories about a thousand years old, known as "Hezar Afsane," and those words mean "the thousand tales," but that collection, although in some ways similar to, is not identical with the "Arabian Nights," or, to give it its correct and complete title, "The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night." From "Hezar Afsane," however, the composers of the "Arabian Nights" are said to have borrowed.

Beyond that, all its origins seem to be lost in the mists of the mysterious East—in those empurpled mists that hang over the folklore of India, Persia and Arabia. Edward William Lane, an English scholar who made the first creditable translation of the "Nights" into English—he working direct from Arabic texts instead of from French translations—thought the date of their composition might lie anywhere from forty years before Columbus' discovery of America to ten years after it. He inclined to the later period.

As to the period of the incidents of the 264 tales which filled clever Queen Scheherezade's (the easiest of several spellings is

Sharazad) anxious thousand and one nights, Lane believed it to be about 786-808 A. D. This calculation was based on ingenious weighing of internal evidence, but some Arabic texts of the "Nights" contain tales the incidents of which belong in a later period of oriental culture than the end of the eighth century.

If Lane's preference for the year 1500 and thereabouts as the period of the composition of the "Nights" is justified, then the stories took two centuries to travel from the orient to the occident. That they at last acccomplished the voyage we owe primarily to a Frenchman. He was Antoine Galland, one of the group of scholars, poets, critics, and artists who made glorious the reign of Louis XIV, and he did much valuable research work in the orient, among other things making the first translation by a European of the "Arabian Nights' Entertainments." It came out from 1704 to 1712 under the title of "Les Mille et Une Nuits." It was verbally inexact, but it was decent in tone—all the detailed voluptuosities being either expurgated or veiled—and from it were made the English translations and versions on which our great-grandfathers and grandfathers grew up.

In 1847 came Lane's translation into English, direct from the Arabic. It was far more exact and copious than Galland's, but it nevertheless was decent, and on it, and on adaptations and abbreviations of it our fathers grew up. Then, from 1882 to 1885 came John Payne's colossal edition, very exact and not so veiled that you can detect any fabric between you and pulsing oriental fleshliness. And on it, I daresay, the children of this generation, they not being squeamish about absence of veils, will grow up. Or on Sir Richard Burton's still more colossal and still barer edition, which followed Payne by one year.

The pleasant fact remaining after all my third hand erudition out of prefaces and reference books is the fact which Emerson puts, Yankee-like—pithily and shrewdly—in "Society and Solitude," the fact that:

> "Scheherezade tells these stories to save her life, and the delight of young Europe and young America in them proves that she fairly earned it."

## XXIII

## THE "AGAMEMNON" OF ÆSCHYLUS

(First acted in the spring of 458 B.C.)

*The Æschylean drama is like a noble bas-relief in which every figure stands out alone, clear cut and sharply defined. The Shakespearean drama is like a pre-Raphaelite picture in which not only is the canvas crowded with characters, some sharply outlined, others half hidden in the background or obscured in the shadow, but every detail of each is drawn with minute and careful observation; and the miracle of Shakespeare's genius is that on this crowded canvas every detail tells.*

*Or, to vary the metaphor, the work of Æschylus is like the architecture of a Doric temple in which all is subordinated to clearness of the great architectonic lines, and the great architectonic lines strike the eye at the first glance; Shakespeare's work is like the architecture of a Gothic cathedral, in which the architectonic lines are hidden and overwhelmed by the mass of detail, until you find the right standpoint from which the whole falls into a harmony more rich, more inspiring for the very wealth of detail which seemed at first sight to mar it; and the wonder of Shakespeare's art is that it inevitably sets us, if we have eyes to see, at that right point of view.*

*Æschylus gives us the awful onward movement and pressure of a relentless purpose by excluding from the stage all that has not a visible bearing on that movement—he isolates before he can express.*

R. S. DE COURCY LAFFAN.

THE "Agamemnon" of Æschylus lacks less than twenty years of being twenty-four centuries old.

But it is as alive as are certain present questions which occupy the minds of thoughtful men and women everywhere—how shall war be banished?—will Europe, taking to heart the lesson of the world war it enkindled, now be content to work out a century of peaceful emulation?—or will the word "Europe"—meaning "land of the setting sun"—which Semitic Asiatics gave in a locative sense to the region on their west, take on a new and mournful significance within the next hundred years?

A vigorous, elderly man, who possessed a stronger power of poetic expression than the world before had heard, wrote this play. He was the first great stage manager in the annals of the theater and one of the theater's most daring innovators.

He was an arranger of dances and could himself dance. He was the first dramatic producer to use appropriate costumes and could himself design costumes. He was the first to erect a stage for the actors and the first to propel action into a tragedy.

He was a soldier in two of the decisive battles of the world—Marathon and Salamis—and he received the equivalent of our distinguished service medal for his valor in the land fight.

He was alert, initiative, ingenious, prolific, and successful, writing for the most critical audiences that ever sat in a theater, and winning thirteen prizes for drama in civic contests. He was so thoroughly of the theater that he became furious when a younger writer named Sophocles carried off the fourteenth prize.

He was a traveler, and close to life and business—and to us despite the twenty-four centuries which intervene.

He wrote the "Agamemnon" in his sixty-seventh hale year.

Read it, soldier of the latest war, and learn that like to thine was ancient pain—the chill, crowded deck, the delayed rations, the rain and the vermin-breeding ground, the biting winter days and, worse, the days of heat brooding and breeding, still and sickening, over the camp.

Read it, citizen, disturbed and afflicted by the bickering of nations, and learn that never was trouble that was not like to thine. Old, too, is the way to cure—but so new as to be still untried.

Æschylus the timely, I call him.

He opens his play with news that the troops are coming home from the Trojan war. With words, for he used no scenery or spectacular effects, he makes his audience see how, across the hundred or so miles of the Ægean that separate the Turkey of our time from Macedonia, the beacon fires are leaping. Along the Grecian coast from peak to peak they fly, news of victory and of home-coming on their wings. It is the wireless of Homer's men.

Picture now a spring day in the year 458 B.C.—the year

Æschylus won a prize with this play and the two that go with it.

Picture from twenty to thirty thousand Athenians sitting in the white sunshine of a roofless theater to hear for the first time on any stage the opening words of the "Agamemnon"—flaming, winged words—and then, if men tell you that the "Agamemnon" is dead and of interest only to students, ask yourself whether the work of any man who, quite literally, wrote for a cityful, and that city the brain-city of the ages, can ever die.

Can words that catch up fire and fling it through the night and across the sea for the cliffs to catch, and over the mountains and down the valleys, till at last it heals the aching eyes of watchers on palace roofs—can such words grow stale?

The wife of the victorious general is speaking—the general who sent her on the night Troy fell that wireless of fire. She is speaking to the elders of a land that has waited ten years for these tidings, and they, doubtful whether the strain can be over, ask her what herald has brought the news. The woman's voice becomes flame. Her lips waft fire. Her sentences are streaming signals when she tells them how the herald was—

> "A Fire-god, from Mount Ida scattering flame,
> Whence starting, beacon after beacon burst
> In flaming message hitherward. Ida first
> Told Hermes' Lemnian Rock, whose answering sign
> Was caught by towering Athos, the divine,
> With pines immense—yea, fishes of the night
> Swam skyward, drunken with that leaping light."
>
> . . . . . .

On! On! Down the coast and over rivers to new heights—

> "Across Asôpus like a beaming moon
> The great word leapt, and on Kithairon's height
> Uproused a new relay of racing light."

Through the night it hurries, finding the watchers alert and—touch of homely actuality amid so much splendor—"waking the wild goats." Always it is—

> "Crying for 'Fire, more Fire!' And fire was reared,
> Stintless and high, a stormy streaming beard,
> That waved in flame beyond the promontory,

Rock-ridged, that watches the Saronian sea,
Kindling the night."

The queen's voice sinks. "These be my proofs," she says:

"These be my proofs and tokens that my lord
From Troy to me hath spoke a burning word."

Twenty-four centuries ago the queen's speech was new. Is it outworn now? Great poets—Shelley, Tennyson and Swinburne among them—have declared that poets never have surpassed it.

To be matter of fact for a moment, I know no better way to make that page of text in the "Agamemnon" a real possession to a young reader than to give him a good map of ancient Greece and let him mark the track of the beacons that brought the good news to Argos. He will do it with red pencil and you will be pleased to see how zestfully he will turn a task into a game, and how gleeful he will be when he comes to the place where the startled goats sprang wondering to stare at the hurrying fire.

The play moves on amid speculation, lamentation, and groping, for doom hangs over the house of this victor-king who hath been too much victorious. Some of it will baffle the young reader, for the style of Æschylus is rugged and compact, and the aim of his good translators is in their turn to pack his meanings into close English. Among the least successful of them I account Browning, who, outdoing Æschylus himself in ruggedness, made ruggedness incoherence, and among the most successful Professor Gilbert Murray, whom we are following in this chapter. His translation is published in inexpensive form.

Let your young reader, like the fire, overleap the baffling passages of the play and press on.

As for its numerous mythological allusions, which came with the force of a creed to the Greek of the fifth century before Christ, they will be sufficiently comprehensible to a boy of the twentieth century after Christ when he has given an hour or two to good old Dr. Smith's classical dictionary.

And so the play moves on, not act by act—for Æschylus did not make those divisions—but speech by speech. Those speeches, and not ingenious plot, swift movement or sudden amazements, are

its glory. They voice heroic conflicts of the soul of man in clash with doom. They release, as by one generous opening of the hand, the garnered wisdom of the ages. They paint pictures which are fresh and eloquent to-day because the pigment was everlasting truth, and the brush, if one may force the figure a little, human experience as it repeats itself from age unto age.

Remembering what his father underwent in sodden Flanders, your boy will come into close kinship with antiquity when he reads the speech of the soldier of Agamemnon who follows hard upon Agamemnon's beacon fires. Bid him remember, too, that by a soldier, a soldier of two wars which did in very truth—not in empty word-mongering—"save Europe," this was written:

> "Oh, could I tell the sick toil of the day,
> The evil nights, scant decks ill-blanketed;
> The rage and cursing when our daily bread
> Came not! And then on land 'twas worse than all.
> Our quarters close beneath the enemy's wall;
> And rain—and from the ground the river dew—
> Wet, always wet! Into our clothes it grew,
> Plague-like, and bred foul beasts in every hair.
> Would I could tell how ghastly midwinter
> Stole down from Ida till the birds dropped dead!
> Or the still heat, when on his noonday bed
> The breathless blue sea sank without a wave! . . .
> Why think of it? They are past and in the grave,
> All those long troubles. For I think the slain
> Care little if they sleep or rise again."

Æschylus was no pacifist. The Sicilians of Gela, where he died while he was a king's honored guest, said nothing about his being a great poet in the lines they carved upon his tomb, but they did say that:

> "How brave in battle was Euphorion's son,
> The long-haired Mede can tell who fell at Marathon."

He was no pacifist, but he never glorifies war. He knew it too well. And with a tenderness that brings tears to eyes which have seen the young, the young of many lands, go forth in the pride of their strength and in the humbleness of their consecration, he mourns for those that came not home again:

"There by Ilion's gate many a soldier sleepeth,
Young men beautiful; fast in hate Troy her conqueror keepeth."

He mourns for those that came not home and he grieves with the women who waited at home, and waited in vain:

"But in each man's dwelling of the host that sailed the seas,
A sad woman waits; she has thoughts of many things,
And patience in her heart lieth deep.
Knoweth she them she sent, knoweth she? Lo, returning,
Comes, in stead of the man that went, armour and dust of burning."

For of some they bring the bodies back from overseas, and Ares, "who changeth quick for dead":

"Back from Troy sendeth dust, heavy dust, wet with tears,
Sendeth ashes with men's names in his urns neatly spread."

Whither is Æschylus leading us? He is leading us whither our world of our day is trying to find the way. The war of the Argives against Troy was a war begun to punish an iniquity. Year after year for ten years it dragged on:

"Till a murmur is begun, and there steals an angry pain
Against kings too forward in the strife.
. . . . . .
For of God not unmarked is the shedder of much blood,
And who conquers beyond right.
. . . . . .
The smiter shall be smit, the taken ta'en."

"To conquer beyond right is to perish." That is what Æschylus has to say to a world four and twenty centuries removed from his time. It was an ancient theme when he wrote a play about it, for King Agamemnon led the Greeks against Troy eight centuries before Æschylus wrote the tragedy of the "Agamemnon."

"To conquer beyond right."

To the Æschylean Greek the unforgivable sin, were it a sin in art or in morals, was the violation of proportion—the sin of insolence, of impious presumption, of vainglory. English has no one word for the delicately shaded Greek ὕβρις. Let punishment become the be all and end all of his existence, then the punisher is pun-

ished. The insensate avenger becomes in turn the victim. It is so when victorious Agamemnon returning safe from Troy meets doom in his own palace partly as a consequence of a criminal design by which he had forwarded the success of the war. It is so with Clytemnestra and Ægisthus when they—in this play's sequel called "Choëphori" (libation-bearers)—are punished by Orestes for the punishment which they had hideously inflicted upon Agamemnon. It is so with Orestes when he—in the "Eumenides" of Æschylus, the third part of the trilogy—is punished by the furies of conscience for the punishment he has inflicted upon his mother and her paramour.

In short, says Æschylus, violence is not the parent of justice. Always, everywhere, it was so, and ever will be.

But man shall learn, says Æschylus:

"Man by suffering shall learn.
So the heart of him, again
Aching with remembered pain,
Bleeds and sleepeth not, until
Wisdom comes against his will."

But the way is long, and like the old men of the Argive state, hearing "a rain that falleth bloodily," the world gropes, and echoes their murmuring:

"I am lost; my mind dull-eyed
Knows not nor feels
Whither to fly nor hide
While the House reels.
The noise of rain that falls
On the roof affrighteth me,
Washing away the walls;
Rain that falls bloodily.

Doth ever the sound abate?
Lo, the next Hour of Fate
Whetting her vengeance due
On new whet-stones, for new
Workings of hate."

# XXIV

## EMERSON'S "REPRESENTATIVE MEN"

(First published in 1850)

### *ON FIRST LOOKING INTO EMERSON'S "REPRESENTATIVE MEN"*

*I remember a day when I stood idly over a counter looking at the backs of what seemed to be newly published books. I drew out one, bound in plain black muslin. Its title, "Representative Men," attracted me, because I had just been reading Plutarch's "Lives," and for the first time had been aroused by the reading of any book. . . . I opened the volume at the beginning, "Uses of Great Men," and read a few pages, becoming more and more agitated until I could read no more there. It was as if I had looked into a mirror for the first time. I turned around, fearing lest some one had observed what had happened to me; for a complete revelation was opened in those few pages, and I was no longer the same being that had entered the shop. These were the words for which I had been hungering and waiting. This was the education I wanted—the message that made education possible and study profitable, a foundation, and not a perpetual scaffolding. These pages opened for me a path, and opened it through solid walls of ignorance and the limiting environment of a small country academy. All that is now far, far away, and seems indeed an alien history; yet however much one may have wandered among famous books, it would be ungrateful not to remember the one book which was the talisman to all its fellows.*

("Remembrances of Emerson," 1900.) JOHN ALBEE.

WHO, then, are Emerson's six representative men? Whom did the American who represented the purest thought and loftiest (not the deepest) scholarship of the nineteenth century select from four ages of the world's culture as representative of the high things of existence? They are:

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| PLATO ..... | 429- 347 B.C. | SHAKESPEARE ... | 1564-1616 A.D. |
| SWEDENBORG .... | 1688-1772 A.D. | NAPOLEON ..... | 1769-1821 A.D. |
| MONTAIGNE ..... | 1533-1592 A.D. | GOETHE ..... | 1749-1832 A.D. |

"And I was no longer the same being," said old John Albee in his far retrospect of the hour when he first looked into "Representative Men." That is a solemn thing to say of the effect produced by a book—solemn for the reader and fraught with a double solemnity for the author. John Albee was sixty-seven years old when he wrote the words which are here reprinted as a text for this little paper. He says that he was "looking at the backs of what seemed to be newly published books" when first he came upon "Representative Men." As Mr. Emerson's seven lectures under that title were not given to the world in book form until 1850, John Albee must have been a lad of eighteen or nineteen when first he took the volume into his hands. He lived until 1915. The book had given direction to a life that comprehended eight decades.

EMERSON ON PLATO
(From "Representative Men.")

*Plato is philosophy, and philosophy, Plato,—at once the glory and the shame of mankind, since neither Saxon nor Roman have availed to add any idea to his categories. No wife, no children had he, and the thinkers of all civilized nations are his posterity and are tinged with his mind. . . . Mysticism finds in Plato all its texts. This citizen of a town in Greece is no villager nor patriot. An Englishman reads and says, "how English!" —a German,—"How Teutonic!"—an Italian,—"how Roman and how Greek!" As they say that Helen of Argos had that universal beauty that everybody felt related to her, so Plato seems to a reader in New England an American genius. His broad humanity transcends all sectional lines.*

Such a propulsion as that is not alone the glory of Emerson and his books; it is also the *usual* thing about him and them. His writings have started more young men toward the far horizons, toward honest thinking, toward an ideal of the dignity of existence, than have the writings of any other man of the nineteenth century in either England or America.

That is not an extravagant statement. It bears the test of demand for chapter and verse, and an illustrious citation of that kind is what James Russell Lowell said of Emerson's influence upon the young New Englanders who went to war, whom, in truth, Emerson sent to war. Lowell said:

"To him more than to all other causes did the young martyrs of our Civil war owe the sustaining strength of thoughtful heroism that is so touching in every record of their lives."

In a special sense is Mr. Emerson's "Representative Men" one of the horizon extenders. The names of his heroes push out the walls of a library and let in the world and the ages—Plato and the flower of Greek culture; Swedenborg and rapturous mysticism out of northern Europe; Montaigne and the questioning, insistent voice of the Renaissance; Shakespeare and the splendors on land and on sea of Elizabethan England; Napoleon and the building of a new Europe; Goethe and the new science. There are 412 years of living which was in some of its aspects the most fruitful and in some the most illustrious that ever has been lived by men—living which comprehended questions—and valiant, eloquent effort to answer them—that shook, vexed, and inspired mankind for twenty-two centuries, and that still are shaking, vexing and inspiring mankind.

Here is a minor matter of interest in passing: Three of Emerson's heroes lived to be over eighty; two died at fifty-two, and one at fifty-nine. Three of them—Shakespeare, Napoleon and Plato—were, ac-

### On Swedenborg

(From "Representative Men.")

*This man, who appeared to his contemporaries a visionary and elixir of moonbeams, no doubt led the most real life of any man then in the world: and now, when the royal and ducal Frederics, Christians and Brunswicks of that day have slid into oblivion, he begins to spread himself into the minds of thousands. . . . It seems that he anticipated much science of the nineteenth century; anticipated, in astronomy, the discovery of the seventh planet,—but, unhappily, not also of the eighth; anticipated the views of modern astronomy in regard to the generation of earths by the sun; in magnetism, some important experiments and conclusions of later students; in chemistry, the atomic theory; in anatomy, the discoveries of Schlichting, Monro and Wilson; and first demonstrated the office of the lungs.*

### On Montaigne

(From "Representative Men.")

*The essays are an entertaining soliloquy on every random topic that comes into his head; treating everything without ceremony, yet with masculine sense. There have been men with deeper insight; but, one would say, never a man with such abundance of thoughts: He is never dull, never insincere, and has the genius to make the reader care for all that he cares for. The sincerity and marrow of the man reaches to his sentences. I know not anywhere the book that seems less written. It is the language of conversation transferred to a book. Cut these words, and they would bleed; they are vascular and alive. One has the same pleasure in it that he feels in listening to the necessary speech of men about their work, when any unusual circumstance gives momentary importance to the dialogue. For blacksmiths and teamsters do not trip in their speech; it is a shower of bullets.*

cording to the interesting computation made by Oliver Wendell Holmes, the persons most often referred to in Emerson's formal writings. Then comes Plutarch, to whom there are seventy references.

What, in Emerson's conception of greatness, was greatness in man?

The six biographical studies in "Representative Men," are preceded by one on "The Uses of Great Men," and in the course of those thirty-five pages Mr. Emerson says "he is great who is what he is from Nature, and who never reminds us of others." It is characteristic of Emerson, and of what literal persons call his self-contradictions, that further along, in the lecture on Shakespeare, he says, "no great men are original." Both dicta are familiar in quotation books which cite Emerson and each one illustrates not his self-contradiction so much as his delight in shading his utterances. Not that he was afraid of self-contradiction. Leading as he did during all of his nearly eighty years the most regular of lives, there still was in him no slavish conformity either to himself or to institutions and once he said, "I wish to say what I feel and think to-day, with the proviso that to-morrow perhaps I shall contradict it all."

ON SHAKESPEARE

(From "Representative Men.")

*Shakespeare is as much out of the category of eminent authors, as he is out of the crowd. He is inconceivably wise; the others, conceivably. A good reader can, in a sort, nestle into Plato's brain and think from thence; but not in Shakespeare's. We are still out of doors. For executive faculty, for creation, Shakespeare is unique. No man can imagine it better. He was the farthest reach of subtlety compatible with an individual self,—the subtilest of authors, and only just within the possibility of authorship. With this wisdom of life is the equal endowment of imaginative and of lyric power. He clothed the creatures of his legend with form and sentiments as if they were people who had lived under his roof; and few real men have left such distinct characters as these fictions. And they spoke in language as sweet as it was fit. Yet his talents never seduced him into an ostentation, nor did he harp on one string. An omnipresent humanity coördinates all his faculties.*

Not then, a book of panacea, this "Representative Men" but a book of stimulation; nor, despite the weight and bulk of the men whom Emerson surveys and estimates, is it an oppressive book, for the reason that it constantly is enlivened by significant anecdote, and by apt quotation not of what great men said of other men but

of the self-revelation of great men in speech as it fell from their lips. A didactic book it truly is, for Emerson, though he could not conscientiously retain his Boston pastorate, remained ever the nation's teacher and preacher, but nevertheless a book full of the specific and the concrete.

Herbert Spencer was for organized facts, for the organization of knowledge; Mr. Emerson was for moralized facts. Facts not possessing moral significance he thought were only clutter. His definition of the hero's mission and of the obligation of greatness is in point. "To demonstrate to all men," he said the mission and the obligation were, "that there is intelligence and good will at the heart of things, and ever higher and yet higher leadings." In short, he was a Platonist.

ON NAPOLEON

(From "Representative Men.")

*Here was an experiment, under the most favorable conditions, of the powers of intellect without conscience. Never was such a leader so endowed and so weaponed; never leader found such aids and followers. And what was the result of this vast talent and power, of these immense armies, burned cities, squandered treasures, immolated millions of men, of this demoralized Europe? It came to no result. All passed away like the smoke of his artillery, and left no trace. He left France smaller, poorer, feebler, than he found it; and the whole contest for freedom was to be begun again. The attempt was in principle suicidal. France served him with life and limb and estate, as long as it could identify its interest with him; but when men saw that after victory was another war; after the destruction of armies, new conscriptions; and they who had toiled so desperately were never nearer to the reward,—they could not spend what they had earned, nor repose on their down-beds, nor strut in their châteaux,—they deserted him. . . . It was not Bonaparte's fault. He did all that in him lay to live and thrive without moral principle. It was the nature of things, the eternal law of man and of the world, which baulked and ruined him; and the result, in a million experiments, will be the same.*

Emerson exalts the everyday man's conception of everyday existence. That is the high usefulness of his service to young men. Live life as reverently as we may, as thoughtfully for ourselves—and for others—as we may, it still imposes upon us much that is sordid, and its fret and fever engender many a hysterical rancor that turns sane purpose awry. Emerson's mission was to teach the everyday man the dignity of man and the inutility of spiritual fuss. For this mission he had a special consecration because he was not only a grandly exceptional man but, in his immediate environment, also an every-

day man. Our wisdom-bringer and our interpreter who takes us so far over the centuries was also one of us. He qualified in the close relations of life. He was a humanitarian, but he was not one of the lovers of humanity who could love and be just and kind to everybody except those in the family and the neighborhood. He was a seer. He also was a good neighbor and good villager. That means much, because village propinquity from which grow rancors, distaste, and mischievous talk is pitilessly close. He was a prophet, but he also kept a neat back yard—test of a good community man. He surveyed the ages, but he also was a member of the Concord fire department. He believed that man's dignity is inherent in him if only he will open his eyes to it, and once he said, in quite a casual way, this great thing: "Let not a man guard his dignity, but let his dignity guard him."

His note is serenity; not a fatuous, self-centered serenity but a cheerful and steadying, for, sounding clear and crisp with it, like the snapping of October frost that mellows rather than blights goodly things, is the note of his Yankee shrewdness. Yet another note do I hear—bell like, deep toned, commanding but suavely tolerant; the note of the man who founded no school, who sought no followers, but who made it a

ON GOETHE

(From "Representative Men.")

*He is the type of culture, the amateur of all arts and sciences and events; artistic, but not artist; spiritual, but not spiritualist. There is nothing he had not right to know: there is no weapon in the armory of universal genius he did not take into his hand, but with peremptory heed that he should not be for a moment prejudiced by his instruments. He lays a ray of light under every fact, and between himself and his dearest property. From him nothing was hid, nothing withholden. The lurking dæmons sat to him, and the saint who saw the dæmons; and the metaphysical elements took form. . . . Enmities he has none. Enemy of him you may be,—if so you shall teach him aught which your good-will can not, were it only what experience will accrue from your ruin. Enemy and welcome, but enemy on high terms. He can not hate anybody; his time is worth too much. . . .*

*Goethe, coming into an over-civilized time and country, when original talent was oppressed under the load of books and mechanical auxiliaries and the distracting variety of claims, taught man how to dispose of this mountainous miscellany and make it subservient. I join Napoleon with him, as being both representatives of the impatience and reaction of nature against the morgue of conventions,—two stern realists, who, with their scholars, have severally set the axe at the root of the tree of cant and seeming, for this time and for all time.*

priestly office when he took men's hands in his firm cool hand; the note of the man who in his old age said, "I have been writing and speaking what were once called novelties, for twenty-five or thirty years, and have not now one disciple, not because that what I said was not true but because it did not go from any wish in me to bring men to me, but to themselves."

## XXV

## CHARLOTTE BRONTË'S "JANE EYRE"

(First published in 1847)

*THE BOOK—*

*"Jane Eyre" was a live coal dropped by some unknown hand.*
AUGUSTINE BIRRELL.

*AND THE AUTHOR—*

*"A little small thing, they say, almost like a child."*—"Jane Eyre," Chapter XXXVI.

YOUR grandparents will well remember the mystery which enveloped the author of "Jane Eyre," and the high excitement which stirred their souls when the book was new.

The mystery endured two years or so.

The excitement renews itself to this day with every new reader who comes to a book now three-quarters of a century old.

Everybody hazarded a guess at the solution of the mystery. Not only did the author's masculine pen name—Currer Bell—automatically carry conviction, but the book was so puissant, so bold, and, for its time, so unfettered, that the early Victorians were sure that the utterer of this new note in English fiction was a man.

Harriet Martineau, always more searching and less credulous than her time, thought not. That supposition, ingenious and correct, she based on three lines in the text of "Jane Eyre." They were:

" . . . a woman sitting on a chair by the bedside, and sewing rings to new curtains. . . . She said, 'Good morning, Miss,' . . . and, taking up another ring and more tape, went on with her sewing."

In the absorbing and instructive book, Miss Martineau's "Autobiography" (vol. II, p. 23), one finds this comment:

"I had made up my mind [about the mystery], as I had repeatedly said that a certain passage in 'Jane Eyre,' about sewing on brass rings, could have been written only by a woman or an upholsterer."

Despite the precedent in the family of Molière, the upholsterer could safely be eliminated, so Miss Martineau was on firm ground.

Some of the mystery mongers had, in truth, taxed Miss Martineau with the authorship of "Jane Eyre," while others, even relatives, believed she had "supplied some of the facts of the first volume from her own childhood." In a sense she had, for parts of her "Household Education" relate fears and miseries of her childhood which were identical with those Charlotte Brontë suffered at Cowan's Bridge school and which in turn she made Jane Eyre suffer at Lowood school, the original of Cowan's Bridge school.

In December, 1849, Charlotte came to see Miss Martineau in London. She was then thirty-three years old; the great, combative Harriet was forty-seven. The little woman, "almost like a child," as the landlord of the Rochester Arms says of Charlotte's Jane, utterly disarmed her, for a page or two further on in the "Autobiography" comes this:

"I thought her the smallest creature I had ever seen (except at a fair), and her eyes blazed, as it seemed to me. . . . When she was seated by me on the sofa, she cast up at me such a look,—so loving, so appealing,—that, in connection with her deep mourning dress and the knowledge that she was the sole survivor of her family, I could with the utmost difficulty return her smile, or keep my composure. I should have been heartily glad to cry."

Strange, epochal, eerie, flaming woman, that little Charlotte from the Yorkshire moors; her too brief life sentineled with sorrows, then suddenly crowned with a fame as swift coming as it has proved enduring; and that life of hers stranger far than was even the tale she told in her best known novel. Best known, I say; "Villette" is the better book, but "Jane Eyre" the better known.

In 1846 she was nothing—less than nothing—for she thought herself a failure. "The Professor," not to be given to print until after her death, had been returned by six publishers. The

little volume of poems which she and her sisters, Emily and Anne, had issued at their own expense, had fallen flat. In Hallam Tennyson's life of his father you find a piteous letter about it. Charlotte was sending the poet a copy, and with it these words:

"... Our book is found to be a drug; no man needs it, nor heeds. In the space of a year the publisher has disposed of but two copies; and by what painful efforts he succeeded in getting rid of these two himself only knows. Before transferring the edition to the trunk-makers ... we beg to offer you one in acknowledgment of the pleasure and profit we have often and long derived from your works."

That was written June 16, 1847.

Four months later to a day "Jane Eyre" came from the press of a great and honorable London house (Smith & Elder) that still is flourishing.

And with it came fame, instant, permanent, dazzling—save that it did not dazzle Charlotte. She had suffered too much.

It was a curious kind of success—partly grounded in revolution, partly in sensation. In short, while the book fired the hearts, it also chilled the blood of our grandparents. The diffident little woman from the moors had been very deft—one wonders whether she knew how deft. She had written a social document, she had brought a new kind of heroine into English letters—a heroine little and plain like herself—but she also had written a thriller. The test of the thrill is easy and decisive. I defy anybody to read in a lonely house at night certain passages of "Jane Eyre" and not heartily wish the family were home.

Hark! Enters the laugh. Twice or thrice it enters this book, and always it breaks upon scenes of deep peace—the sweet aspect of a sylvan afternoon or the quiet of a sleeping household. There is exquisite deftness in that. Jane is viewing the countryside from the roof of Thornfield Hall:

"... the church at the gates, the road, the tranquil hills, all reposing in the autumn day's sun; the horizon bounded by a propitious sky, azure, marbled with pearly white. No feature in the scene was extraordinary, but all was pleasing."

Jane descends the stairs:

"While I paced softly on, the last sound I expected to hear in so still a region, a laugh, struck my ear. It was a curious laugh—distinct, formal, mirthless. I stopped; the sound ceased, only for an instant; it began again, louder—for at first, though distinct, it was very low. It passed off in a clamorous peal that seemed to wake an echo in every lonely chamber. . . . The laugh was repeated in its low syllabic tone, and terminated in an odd murmur. . . . the laugh was as tragic, as preternatural a laugh as any I ever heard."

Wishing the family would come home, we nevertheless push on —some seventy pages—for we are in the thrall of the book now.

Again peace, silence. It is night:

"The clock, far down the hall, struck two. Just then it seemed my chamber door was touched; as if fingers had swept the panels in groping a way along the dark gallery outside. I said, 'Who is there?' Nothing answered. I was chilled with fear."

After long listening, Jane falls asleep, but—

" . . . a dream had scarcely approached my ear when it fled affrighted, scared by a marrow freezing incident enough.

"This was a demoniac laugh—low, suppressed, and deep—uttered, as it seemed, at the very keyhole of my chamber door. . . . Something gurgled and moaned."

How still the house is! Will the family never return? But eagerly we read on—say, a hundred pages. The drawing rooms of Thornfield are quiet. The gay house party has retired. Quiet, too, is Jane's bedroom. It is not laughter that breaks the stillness now. It is a sound more appalling:

"The moon . . . was full and bright. . . . It was beautiful, but too solemn: I half rose, and stretched my arm to draw the curtain.

"Good God! What a cry!

"The night—its silence, its rest—was rent in twain by a savage, a sharp, a shrilly sound that ran from end to end of Thornfield Hall. . . . . The cry died, and was not renewed. Indeed, whatever being uttered that fearful shriek could not soon repeat it; not the widest-winged condor in the Andes could twice in succession send out such a yell from the cloud shrouding his eyrie."

These are not supernatural sounds, for this is no tawdry ghost story. They are fearsomely actual, and they are part of both the mechanism and the symbol of Miss Brontë's book.

I envy the newcomer to "Jane Eyre" the week he will spend with it. Irked he will be by the author's "fine writing," and than her fine writing there is nothing worse outside the pages of the "Camilla" of her great predecessor, Miss Burney. It is a parallel with a difference. The Miss Burney of "Evelina," which was not "fine," grew into her fine writing. The Miss Brontë of "Jane Eyre" grew out of hers in "Villette," which came six years later, and some pages of which are, said so eminent a craftsman as George Meredith, "the high water mark of English prose in our time."

Take one hint from this chapter of a book which tries to avoid admonition: Do not visit Brussels, a capital highly worth visiting under any conditions, until you have read "Villette"—Charlotte's name for the city—and then take the volume with you thither. It will treble the charm of a city eminent for charm.

To touch, in Meredith's words, "the high water mark of English prose in our time," proves manifestly, the possession of enormous power by the artist attaining such a height. But Miss Brontë's power was coupled with a bewitching daintiness that created effects not less luminous than those which had their source in power. The last nine words of this unforced bit of description in "Jane Eyre" provide a specimen of one of her quietly poignant effects:

"Far and wide, on each side, there were only fields, where no cattle now browsed; and the little brown birds, which stirred occasionally in the hedge, looked like single russet leaves that had forgotten to fall."

In a grief-laden passage involving Jane and the blind Rochester, the intense practicality that was as much a part of Jane's nature as her passionate emotionalism is wafted to the reader in six words which I for the reader's convenience—Miss Brontë was too true an artist to do it—here italicize:

"The water stood in my eyes to hear this avowal of his dependence: just as if a royal eagle chained to his perch, should be forced to entreat

a sparrow to become its purveyor. But I would not be lachrymose: I dashed off the salt drops, *and busied myself with preparing breakfast.*"

Charlotte herself was like that; "good needlewoman and excellent cook," as Mrs. Gaskell's life of her makes clear, but also the woman who, in Taine's words, "defended the initiative and independence of woman," and did it at a time when not only those qualities but the defender of them required a good deal of defending. The early Victorians, save for the men of light and leading among them, were never quite reconciled to either Jane or Charlotte.

Nor were certain of Miss Brontë's social views more to the liking of many Victorians. She did not consider the privations of the poor as necessarily a boon either to them in particular or to society in general. That, in the England of 1848, was worse than rebellion against man's law; it was rebellion against God's law. The *Quarterly Review's* murderous article on "Jane Eyre" in that year contained this now incredible passage:

> "Altogether the autobiography of Jane Eyre is preëminently an anti-Christian composition. There is throughout it a murmuring against the comforts of the rich and against the privations of the poor, which, so far as each individual is concerned, is a murmuring against God's appointment."

But true moralists and true artists did not then and do not now miss the moral and the artistic significance of revolutionary "Jane Eyre."

This little paper would blossom into a garden of praise if it introduced a thousandth part of the exultant verdicts passed upon "Jane Eyre" by Miss Brontë's fellow craftsmen and their successors—how it moved Thackeray to tender awe by its truth and courage (he called Charlotte "an austere little Joan of Arc marching in upon us"—by "us" meaning that sophisticated London she stunned in 1847); how mad Swinburne wanted to name the elfish little spinster from the lonely parsonage at Haworth with Shakespeare; how old Justin McCarthy, excited to the point of unconsciously making a sort of rhyme amid the formal prose of his "History of Our Own Times," wrote, "'Jane Eyre'

and 'Villette' are positively aflame with passion and pain"; how the staid Scotch critic, Peter Bayne—staid and awesomely pious—said of Miss Brontë that she "looked life in its iron face," and that the peculiar strength of "Jane Eyre" was "the delineation of one relentless and tyrannizing passion"; how as lately as 1901 William Dean Howells called it "an epochal book" and pronounced Jane to be her creator's "one heroine of the first rank," adding, not without plaintiveness, that perhaps one such "is enough for one author—so many authors have invented no memorable heroine at all."

And how, at the last, Miss Martineau, writing of the woman and the artist after death had closed those tired eyes, said that in her vocation of truth teller, satirist, and foe of sham and caste she had combined "the deep intuitions of a gifted woman, the strength of a man, the patience of a hero, and the conscientiousness of a saint."

No mere craftsman, however skilled, commands tribute so earnest and so various. It is of a kind and of a measure reserved for the great moral teachers in literature. Such a moralist Miss Brontë was. The shuddering excitement of "Jane Eyre" is a valid part of the book—no trick. But its abiding spell has its source in something profounder than its thrills. The reader coming new to the story will live with a life—a brave, honest, self-respecting one. Nay, more, an indomitable life. Indomitable, I say, because the obstacle to Jane's happiness which voiced itself in the awful laughter and the soul shaking cry was an obstacle which she could have gone around. She would not go around. She confronted it; she accepted it as part of the discipline of pain, and, ghastly though it was, it became the emblem of her victory. The book is the history of a valiant being from her tenth to her twentieth year. A valiant soul from the first. Even as a dependent and a child Jane confronts lies and cant and inhumanity with blazing eyes and blistering tongue—suffering, but valiant ever. Always it is the testing of the soul of little Jane Eyre. That is the story. Its note is the note of a fortitude that makes Jane sublime the while she is a creature of desires and passions that make her our sister. Her value to us is that

she renders hateful the face of evil, and most renders it so when it is masked by hypocrisy and self-righteousness. More than that, she makes it hateful when its eyes shine and tempt with the pleasant lure of specious compromises and of desires gratified.

Through the long trial we follow her—as the penniless orphan who felt herself a "discord at Gateshead Hall," as the wan sufferer at a charity school, as one betrothed and dreadfully deceived in the betrothal, as one working out a process of self-abnegation that was crucifixion, and as a craft, sorely battered but still stanch, come safe into quiet waters.

I have spoken of those tumidities of Miss Brontë's style which, though not very numerous, are numerous enough to withhold from her work the seal of perfection. But she did not err in that way when she brought her little Jane into the harbor of heart's desire at last, to cast anchor beside the maimed and contrite Rochester. It is very simple, very subdued:

"Then he stretched out his hand to be led. I took that dear hand, held it a moment to my lips, then let it pass round my shoulder; being so much lower of stature than he, I served both for his prop and guide. We entered the wood and wended homeward."

# XXVI

## CHAUCER'S "CANTERBURY TALES"

(Composed during the last two decades of the fourteenth century)

*CHAUCER*

*An old man in a lodge within a park;*
*The chamber walls depicted all around*
*With portraitures of huntsmen, hawk, and hound,*
*And the hurt deer. He listeneth to the lark,*
*Whose song comes with the sunshine through the dark*
*Of painted glass in leaden lattice bound;*
*He listeneth and he laugheth at the sound,*
*Then writeth in a book like any clerk.*
*He is the poet of the dawn, who wrote*
*The Canterbury Tales, and his old age*
*Made beautiful with song; and as I read*
*I hear the crowing cock, I hear the note*
*Of lark and linnet, and from every page*
*Rise odors of ploughed field or flowery mead.*

HENRY WADSWORTH LONGFELLOW.

*After 400 years [it is 500 now] have closed over the mirthful features which formed the living originals of the poet's descriptions, his pages impress the fancy with the momentary credence that they are still alive; as if Time had rebuilt his ruins, and were reacting the lost scenes of existence.*

THOMAS CAMPBELL.

*Shakespeare is not our poet, but the world's,*
*Therefore on him no speech! And brief for thee,*
*Browning! Since Chaucer was alive and hale,*
*No man hath walk'd along our roads with steps*
*So active, so inquiring eye, or tongue*
*So varied in discourse.*

("To Robert Browning.") WALTER SAVAGE LANDOR.

THE way to read Chaucer is to plunge in. The approach to him through "modernizations," and "renderings" into the speech

of our time, is a roundabout and purblind (using that word in Tennyson's, not Shakespeare's, sense) business that blurs—when it does not destroy—half of the beauty and charm of the true Chaucer. Of all the books that give a man who hath any gusto for the history of words what Chaucer himself would have called a "peyne" such an inutile thing as a "modern reader's Chaucer" is the premier. It is a lazy man's way to—nothing. From the time of Dryden to the time of Percy MacKaye such experiments —well-meant but essentially impertinent—have never been successful.

When Aubrey de Vere asked Norton of Harvard to undertake the experiment, "for the sake of rendering Chaucer more popular among the careless and indolent," the great Dantean refused to do it, saying that to him "much of the essential charm of Chaucer lies in his very words," and that "the best modernizations of the 'Tales' have lost that morning freshness of idiom, that clear, springlike tone which makes his verse the simplest and gladdest that ever was written."

There are, as a matter of fact, only from four to five hundred wholly obsolete words in Chaucer.

His English is not to be thought of as dead and dusty. It is as living and as savory as the English of Synge's peasants is. The men who spoke it were the men who marched under Edward III and conquered kingdoms; the men who, sickening of Richard II's philanderings, put a real man on the throne; the men who were your fathers some twelve to fifteen times removed. The lives of six successive men, each ninety years of age, would span the centuries that separate us from Chaucer's heyday. (That is a trick of computation I learned out of Thoreau. How neatly it knits up the ages and how closely makes us kin with antiquity.)

Reading Chaucer as Chaucer wrote is the finest game in the pleasant fields of literature. A child can enjoy it; an old man, even if he have not a collegiate background, can by means of the game make himself a scholar in our language. Tackle a passage! Be not dismayed by long disused word-endings, nor by "such" when it is spelled "swich," and "then" when it presents itself to you as "thanne." Employ a little Yankee contriving, and,

when you read in the "general prologue" to "The Canterbury Tales" of Geoffrey Chaucer that the pretty prioress, Madame Eglentyne, was "so charitable and so pious" that she would weep if men smote one of her little hounds with a "yerde," you might mind you of the word yardstick, and, so minding, leap to the conclusion that "yerde" means stick. You would leap to some purpose, for "yerde" originally meant rod or stick.

Likewise keep current mispronunciations and distortions of words in mind when you are reading Chaucer, and jokes and plays on words that small boys and the buffoons on the stage make. Then coming on "wif" in Chaucer you will smile and say "Some time lately it aroused laughter to pronounce the word 'wife' as if it were spelled 'wif.'" And you thus will have the right translation of Chaucer's "wif" or "wyf," though the word sometimes also means "betrothed" in his text.

The important matter is to read Chaucer not alone with the eye but with the lips. Read him valiantly aloud, not in a murmur, but with full bodied stress. If the meaning of one of his words eludes you, experiment with it. Broaden or shorten the vowels in it. "Techying" becomes instantly obvious if we pronounce the first syllable as if there were two e's in it. Drop, when baffled, final syllables, or turn two syllables into one, or substitute an s for a final "en." Speak out some of the words precisely as Chaucer's spelling makes them sound and you will find that they make precisely the sound some illiterate persons give them to-day. That will give you a humbling pause, for you will wonder whether those persons are so much illiterate as merely belated. Perhaps they are nearer to the "well of English undefyled," as Spenser called Chaucer, than we literates are.

It is a fine game one may play in the pleasant fields of Chaucer!

And what is the prize of the game?

It is this: You wander freely in a sunny garden of language—an old fashioned garden where grow posies like these:

"The besy larke, the messenger of daye."

"May, that mother of monethes glad."

"Nature, the vicar of Almightie Lord."

Or gnomic bits like this:

"It is nat good a sleping hound to wake."

In a week a reader who reads with any attentiveness can become not a proficient but a fairly easy-stepping Chaucerian.

Learn a few obsolete word-endings, con faithfully the glossary, be mindful of certain ancient meanings that have passed like ghosts out of our language, and a new world is yours, a new-old world that was busy and contentious even as ours, that was fighting great battles—both Crecy and Poitiers were fought when Geoffrey Chaucer was a boy—that was getting our language into order, that was marveling over its earliest book of English prose—the spurious "Travels" of the non-existent Sir John Mandeville, and that was reading Wycliffe's new translation of the Bible. Boccaccio's ladies and gentlemen were telling their highly unladylike tales when Chaucer was a boy, and Petrarch was singing when he was grown, and by the time he had told his last tale and been borne to his rest in the corner of the Abbey which since has become a shrine of poets, the discovery of America was distant only by the life of a long-lived man.

The glory of a great dawn was streaming over the world and men were living vehemently when Chaucer wrote.

Into that world you go intimately through the book of the Canterbury tales and from it you learn things singularly applicable to your daily comings and goings now. You learn what really mean the names of your friends Mr. Sumner, Mr. Shipman, Mr. Reeve or Reeves, Mr. Franklin, Mr. Clark, Mr. Beck, Mr. Chapman, Mr. Pilcher, Mr. Palmer, Mr. Coke, Mr. Holt, Mr. Webb, Mr. Fletcher, and a dozen others; and you learn those things unforgettably, for they are woven into an entrancing group of tales. You begin to be conscious of a new sense of mastery over the English language. You feel that you are not taking so many words for granted—not taking them any more as arbitrary signs but as rich and instructive growths.

Chaucer is not dead, nor recondite, nor a school task. How close, do you think, is he to your daily speech and thought? Nearer than you wot of.

Take this double handful of his laconicisms as proof. Listen to these familiars coming across five centuries to your surprised but recognizing ears from Chaucer's "Canterbury Tales," his "Troilus and Cressida" and other romances of his:

"And certeinly he was a good felaw."

"For losse of catel may recovered be,
But losse of tyme shendeth us, quod he."

"Forbede us thyng, and that desiren we."

"I hate hym that my vices tellen me."

"A man shal wynne us best with flaterye."

"But I woot best wher wryngeth me my sho."

"For dronkennesse is veray sepulture
Of mannes wit, and his discrecioun."

"He hasteth well that wisely can abide."

"My sone keepe wel thy tonge, and keepe thy freend."

"Thanne is it wysdom, as it thynketh me,
To maken vertu of necessitee."

"Ther n' is no werkman whatever he be,
That may both werken wel and hastily.
This wol be done at leisure parfitly."

"So was hire joly whistle wel ywette."

"In his owene grece I made him frye."

"And for to see, and eek for to be seye."

"I hold a mouses wit nat worth a leke,
That hath but on hole for to sterten to."

"That he is gentil that doth gentil dedis."

"Therefore behoveth him a ful long spone,
That shall eat with a fend."

"Full wise is he that can himselven knowe."

"Mordre wol out, that see we day by day."

"The firste vertue, sone, if thou wilt lere,
Is to restreine and kepen wel thy tonge."

"The proverbe saith that many a smale maketh a grate."

"Of harmes two the lesse is for to cheese."

"For of fortunes sharpe adversite,
The worst kind of infortune is this,—
A man to han ben in prosperite,
And it remembrer whan it passed is."

"One eare it heard, at the other out it went."

"The lyfe so short, the craft so long to lerne,
Th' assay so hard, so sharpe the conquering."

Those bits of Chaucer were copied from different printings of the poet—some with the spelling a little simplified—so that you should see how "nat" and "not" are equivalents, and "thanne" and "then," how y and i are interchangeable, how the same word may be written sometimes with two e's and sometimes with one, and so on.

But it is not the prospect of instruction so much as the certainty of delight that ought to lure us to Chaucer's Canterbury masterpiece, which from the reign of Richard II to the reign of Elizabeth was the best selling poem in the English language and which still is steadily bought, but has ceased to be a real possession of us plain folk. The humor, the pathos, the humanity, the pictorial bits, the grace, the joyousness, and the wisdom which make great poetry the refreshment and solace of sensitive beings all bloom in Chaucer's garden. I can remember a little boy who used dearly to love the sheer word-wizardry of Arcite's dying speech to Emelye (Emily) in the long "Knight's Tale," which is the first of the twenty-four Canterbury tales. This child, no doubt a moon-struck oddment of humanity, would go about the house sing-songing the words to himself, making a long, soft moaning on the last line—"Alone—withouten an-y com-paign-ye." You cannot tell me that the child knew why he loved the lines, or that he loved the colde grave or to be withouten any company, but turning now to my Chaucer I can see that somehow was wrought in that small mind the spell which true poets ever are striving for—the spell which has its source in cadence, in simple expedients grandly employed, in directness of appeal that seems artless and *is* unforced, in vigorous diction, and in a pathos so unlabored that it is like a soft crying in the still night. Thus move the lines in the Ellesmere text of "The Knight's Tale":

"Allas the wo! allas, the peynes stronge,
That I for yow have suffred, and so longe!
Allas, the deeth! allas, myn Emelye!
Allas, departynge of our compaignye!
Allas, myn hertes queene! allas, my wyf!
Myn hertes lady, endere of my lyf!
What is this world? what asketh men to have?
Now with his love, now in his colde grave
Allone, with outen any compaignye."

Therein I find but two words that could have baffled the child. "Departynge" he would hardly make out as "sundering" and "endere" may not have come to him as "ender," but I daresay those hard places did not much detain or worry him.

Long years thereafter this child marked with a certain fatuous complacency—for he was not so childlike nor so unselfconscious now—that the passage he had loved was also a favorite passage of Tennyson's, and he read that Palgrave, recalling how the laureate would speak the lines, said that the tone on the last line was always "amorously lingering," which, no doubt, was the equivalent of the child's moonstruck moaning. He read, too, how his favorite Leigh Hunt, coming to that same haunting last line, would remark, "How piteous the tautology, 'alone—withouten any company'!"

We have glanced at the gnomic Chaucer and the pathetic Chaucer. We must save a word for the roguish, merry Chaucer, the Chaucer of the abounding relish for the whims and brags and foibles and follies of mankind.

The Tales are a kind of fourteenth century "Pickwick Papers" and that robust company of so many callings and kinds and interests—there were a knight, a squire, a yeoman, a prioress, a nun, a priest, a monk, a merchant, a clerk, a lawyer, a physician, a haberdasher, a carpenter, a weaver, a dyer, a cook, a mariner, a plowman, a miller, and a poet among the nine and twenty pilgrims —was a kind of medieval Rotary club, each member bent on hearing a good story, extolling his own calling, and doing his own soul and the souls of others a bit of good if perchance matters agreeably fall that way. So in this three day ride, in April, 1383, of sixty miles from the Tabard inn in London to the shrine

of Thomas à Becket in Canterbury cathedral did matters fall, and the result was a group of four and twenty tales, of which the masterpieces are the Knight's, the Nun's, the Nun's Priest's, the Physician's, the Clerk's and the second Nun's contributions to the general entertainment.

One word in parting from that delectable company of wits and sentimentalists—you will never regret getting a fine edition of Chaucer, for when you buy his book you are buying a lifetime treasure—a book of instruction and a book of delight.

## XXVII

## JOHANN DAVID WYSS'S "SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON"

(First published in 1812)

*One of the dearest old books in the world.*

WILLIAM DEAN HOWELLS.

(Introduction to the 1909 American edition of "The Swiss Family Robinson.")

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"The storm, which had lasted for six long and terrible days, appeared on the seventh to redouble its fury. We were driven out of our course far to the southeast, and all trace of our position was lost. Sailors and passengers were alike worn out with fatigue and long watching; indeed, all hope of saving the ship had disappeared. The masts were spilt and overboard, the sails rent, and the water in the hold from a leak made us expect every moment to be swallowed up in the waves."

So the tale begins!

Be they boys or men—and the girls also, I am told,—readers in all reading lands have, these hundred and fifteen years, found that beginning irresistible.

"The Swiss Family Robinson," which Pastor Wyss of Berne first read from manuscript to his children, is one of the books that once read remain a permanent possession. Whether that is because we read it first in childhood, when the mind is uncluttered, or because Johann David Wyss was a genuine artist in the effective disposition of extensive material, I know not. His material is immense, and one thing is certain: A sensible boy, having attentively read the story, has learned more about processes, contrivances, and the nature of things, animate and inanimate, than most adults who have not read "The Swiss Family Robinson" ever learn. That fact is a remarkable tribute to a book which librarians catalogue as a juvenile. But this book is much more than that. It is an epic in little of civilization—a romance of the varied

contrivings by which man has raised himself from the state of nomad to the state of developer, controller, and—more or less—of perfecter. A book should be read in relation to life. If it cannot be so read, it is no book. This book is all life. The multitude and variety of incident are astounding. There are—in the inviting type of the authoritative Harper edition of 1909—600 pages of text, and, on an average, there are three things doing on every page. Invariably they are things that have to do with life as it must be lived if man is to get through it with decency, comfort, usefulness, and a fair degree of distinction.

"The Swiss Family Robinson," which has been reprinted, translated, adapted, abridged, parodied, and illustrated so often that nothing like a complete bibliography of it exists in any language, is the best known book by a Swiss that ever came out of Switzerland, and in its engaging combination of practicality and piety it is intensely characteristic of that sterling land. Its history is curious and intricate. The fame of its author rests on it and on it alone, and yet he never bothered to publish it. Nor, indeed, in any personal sense, did it bring him fame. Incredible as it may seem to you, this unpretentious little chapter is one of the few written in English that emphatically credit the authorship of "The Swiss Family Robinson" to the actual originator of the tale. Chambers', Appleton's, the International, the Americana, Nelson's, the Century Cyclopedia of Names, and almost all other generally used works of reference credit it wrongly. The new Britannica is correct.

The error, which has persisted for more than a century, lies in naming as sole author of "The Swiss Family Robinson" the Swiss scholar, folklorist, and poet Johann Rudolf Wyss. He was the son of the veritable author, Johann David Wyss, and probably heard the tale in its first form at his father's knee. The father obtained the original hints for it from a Russian sea-captain's report of his discovery, on an island lying between north central Australia and New Guinea, of a Swiss clergyman and his family, who had been shipwrecked there. From this report Pastor Wyss developed the story which his four children heard around the fireside and which has entranced other children the world over.

He was well equipped for his genial task. He had a strict sense of decorum, tempered by a loving heart, and he relished a fact as most men relish their dinner. He understood several languages —could preach in German and French—had no contemptible knowledge of science, and, as a military chaplain, had learned from observation a great deal about expeditious ways of doing things. As to form and spirit, his literary model was, obviously, "Robinson Crusoe."

His son, Rudolf, has, as such things go, an immortal fame of his own, for he wrote the Swiss national anthem, "Rufst du mein Vaterland?" which is sung to the air of "My Country 'Tis of Thee," and the lovely song in dialect, "Herz, myn Herz, warum so trurig?"

Rudolf published his father's manuscript of the "Swiss Family" in 1812 (some of the books say 1813) with additions of his own, and with the copious title, "The Swiss Family Robinson; or, The Shipwreck of the Swiss Minister and his Family. An instructive book for children and the friends of children in city and country." According to some authorities, old Pastor Wyss would then have been alive, for they give the date of his death as 1818; according to others he left the book *in manuscript* at his death. In any case Johann Rudolf's 1812-13 edition, or rather the French translations of it which soon followed the German original, started in Europe the error that he was the sole and veritable author of "The Swiss Family Robinson." That error became world-wide, although in the further enlarged 1827 edition Johann Rudolf distinctly said:

> "I follow my father's original manuscript just as before . . . and all that is original, instructive, and best in this book is due to my father."

Such is the bare outline of one of the most curious confusions in literary annals. It was further complicated by the fact that Baronne Isabelle de Montolieu, a Swiss writer and translator of French extraction, added a second part to the original edition of the story and got her name and her additions so linked with the true Wyss versions that many a reader—perusing one of the unauthentic editions—supposes he is reading the Wysses. Her

work is pretty bad, and lacks the sweet earnestness and the informative value of the original.

*"The storm, which had lasted for six long and terrible days, appeared on the seventh to redouble its fury."*

A great beginning, yes. But it is not in its unfolding of "most disastrous chances and moving accidents by flood and field" that the essential charm of this story lies. The charm lies in the presentation of man as a contriving animal—a building animal plus the genius for readily, subtly, and independently varying his contrivances to suit new conditions and sudden exigencies, which is one of the capacities distinguishing him from the lower animals. That capacity has made a great story ever since man first came out of his cave and began to build in the open. You may see evidence of the fascination of it any day in the throng loitering in front of a building in process of erection. Persons deficient in imagination sneer, and call the lookers-on idlers, and wonder whether they have naught better to do. Naught *else* to do they may have, but aught more entertaining they could hardly find. They are answering to the same spell that carries a child so eagerly and attentively through the 600 pages and the ten years of incidents of "The Swiss Family Robinson."

The child sighs with satisfaction over the completion of the house in the capacious mangrove or wild fig tree which the industrious and resourceful castaways name Falkonhurst (Falcon's Nest), and he brings every instinct and impulse of his heaven-sent constructive mind to bear on every stage of the ingenious contrivings which change the noxious cave, the breath of which was death, to a cheerful, lamp-lit, shelf-lined abode equipped with conveniences and decked with ornament. That child—for children have such beautiful responsiveness that they are instinctively at one with goodly folk and goodly things—shares the benediction of the castaways' day:

"And so every day brought its work; we had no time to be idle, nor to lament over our separation from our old home and the society of mankind. Each night we lay down to rest after our evening meal, and slept in peaceful contentment, after the toils of the day, that sleep which only health and active employment can secure."

And the little things by the way—things, however, that only seem little, for they are the things by thinking out which man has effected his survival and found his way to civilization. Once the father is telling the boys how cups, plates, spoons, bottles, "and even cooking vessels" are made from the shells of gourds. "But the shell would burn if placed on the fire!" exclaims Fritz. The father interposes his characteristic "nevertheless." Then comes this colloquy:

"'That is a curious idea, to cook without fire.'

"'My boy, you jump to conclusions too quickly. I did not say they cooked their food without fire. I wish you would reflect before you speak. Let me now explain. The natives, when they use the gourd for cooking, divide the shell into two parts and fasten a handle on each. Into these they pour water, as we should into a saucepan, and place in it portions of fish, crab, or anything else that they wish to cook. Red-hot stones are then thrown in, which boil the water, and while the dinner is being quickly prepared the shell remains unhurt.'"

In the same spirit of an ingenuous but by no means fatuous kind of tutelage is the incident of little Jack's struggle with the oyster:

"While we were discussing this question, Jack was using his utmost efforts to open an oyster with his knife, but without success.

"'You will never succeed, Jack,' I said, 'unless you place the oysters on the hot embers; they will then open of themselves.'

"In a few minutes Jack brought me an open oyster."

I was mulling over the book with a man who went through a university. "Dashed," said he, when we came to the oyster episode—"dashed if I would have thought of that!"

Mrs. Robinson can tell them all something essential, as her husband acknowledges:

"In a short time he [one of the boys] returned with what was evidently common salt, but so mixed with sand that I should have thrown it away had not my wife prevented me from doing so.

"'I can improve it,' she said, 'by dissolving it in fresh water and straining it through a piece of linen.' And so it proved, for the pure salt passed through, and my wife put it in the soup.

"'Why could we not use sea-water?' asked Jack.

" 'Because it would be too bitter,' replied Ernest. 'The bitter taste is very strong when sea-water is boiled.'

" 'Quite right, Ernest,' I said. 'Sea-water contains a bitumen very disagreeable to the taste, which does not exist in crystallized salt.' "

Another time one of the lads is made to work out a problem for himself:

" 'How cleverly you manage, papa!' he said. 'I have tried with all my efforts to obtain sugar from one of the canes, but I cannot succeed.'

" 'There is a cause for your failure,' I replied; 'reflect a little, and perhaps you will find it out.'

"After a few minutes of silence he exclaimed:

" 'Papa, I have discovered the reason; suction requires air to assist it. I believe if I make a hole just above the first joint of the cane that the juice will come.' While he thus spoke he pierced a small opening with the point of his penknife, and the sweet liquid passed freely into his mouth."

Contrivings, contrivings, contrivings all the way along—the contriving by which the shell of the giant sea tortoise is converted into a wash basin; the contriving by which the ducks and geese—gone wild again as a result of the absence of humans—are lured from the water with string and a bit of cheese; the contriving—aniseed this time—by which the pigeons are made home bodies, and, best of all, the contriving of gentle, sapient, purling old Pastor Johann David himself by which vast numbers of illuminating facts are so trustfully and cheerily eased toward the reader that a child thinks the book is all story and a man is persuaded it is all fact.

And the complacent, homely, obvious bits of reflection on life and conduct and nature. Here are a few:

"Fire—that true friend of man."

"Hope as well as care is no friend to sleep."

"Children are often cruel from want of thought."

"Ah, my boys, youth is the time to learn: it is too late after the cares of the world fall on our shoulders."

"If we are thoughtful at the right time to place anything useful where it can be easily and quickly found, that is the best magic."

" 'The morning hour carries gold in its mouth.' " (In the text this utterance from Father Robinson's lips is in single quotes, and Mr. T. E. Magel informs me that it is a proverb of German-Swiss origin, adding, "As children we were thus admonished by our mother times without number.")

Of course, there is a moral. Our good pastor pauses in the thirty-seventh of his forty-one chapters—the chapter entitled "After Ten Years"—to give us it, and when I lately read it anew I remembered how Emerson in the Journals minds him of:

" . . . the Sunday-School man who said his class were already in the 'Swiss Robinson,' and he hoped by next term to get them into 'Robinson Crusoe.' "

That Concord Sunday-school class might have fared further than "The Swiss Family Robinson" for a moral and found a worse, for here is what the pastor says:

"I am now anxious to describe the result of these exertions, and I shall be satisfied if the design of the book is sufficiently clear to the young reader to prove what the members of a family who, even under trying circumstances, live piously and in harmony together, can perform by industry and perseverance. By the blessing of God on their endeavors, they are strengthened and made successful, and fitted to become useful members of society and of the community to which they belong.

"The story will prove also how innumerable are the gifts of the Creator as seen in nature, if we search for them, and that not one of these benefits can be too trifling to be made useful and profitable to ourselves by intelligence, industry, and a well-ordered mind."

I think we all, of whatever Sunday-school class—or of none—can say Amen to that, and, if we would give it a latter-day application, mind ourselves that the laboratory has become an adjunct of the great industries:

*"Innumerable are the gifts of the Creator as seen in nature, if we search for them, and not one of these benefits can be too trifling to be made useful and profitable to ourselves by intelligence, industry, and a well-ordered mind."*

## XXVIII

## BOSWELL'S "LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON"

(First published in 1791)

*. . . I'm reading Boswell daily by way of a Bible; I mean to read Boswell now until the day I die.*

ROBERT LOUIS STEVENSON.

(Letter to Mrs. Sitwell, July, 1876, when Stevenson was twenty-six.)

"STAY," said the German when Goldsmith, as Boswell puts it, was "rattling away as usual." "Stay,—Toctor Shonson is going to say something." In this little lure-paper on Boswell's book, the German's admonition shall be heeded, for here are nearly 1,400 pages (the reference is to the cheap, convenient Oxford edition of 1904), and on almost every one of them Doctor Johnson is saying something—something wise, or witty, or sententious, or spontaneous, or jovial, or mournful, or kindly, or abusive; always something worth saying and worth remembering; always something human.

But, like the Bible, Boswell's book has too many too good friends. These 136 years—for it was a best seller from the start—they have been saying, "You ought to read it." What is universally praised is soon universally taken for granted, and zest departs from the contemplation of it. It is so with Boswell's book in the minds of many who have been bothered and bored by praise of it. Its fame has extinguished their interest in it, and their reply to the somewhat lordly "You ought to read it" is that they do not read it.

It is a pity.

For this is a book of unflagging vivacity. A "life" of a great scholar who wrote a dictionary and many essays and biographies and some stately poems? Nay, it is naught so routine. It is the

story, varied, lively, fond, and flowing, of the daily comings and goings of a great *human being,* the most decisive man of his time and country—what he ate, and wore, and did, and said, and thought —how he worked, prayed, stormed, served, failed, succeeded, and died—and how he hoped he was going to heaven, but had his doubts. In this revelation of a man who lived seventy-five busy, fruitful years there are all his crotchets and bigotries, his great-heartedness, his gentleness and his violence, all his little tricks of manner, and hundreds of his gnomic utterances.

But James Boswell's book about Samuel Johnson is more than that, for this great human being met everybody of his time whom he cared to meet, from the king in the palace to the forger about to be hanged. And concerning both he spoke his mind. Hence the book is the lively picture of an age—the busy, talking, writing, war-making age of the first three Georges of England. It is the portraiture of half a century of brilliant men.

Even as it is a book of many illustrious men, it is also a book for many moods, be your mood at the moment the mood for anecdotes, for criticism of books, for pleasantries, for sententiousness, for remarks on politics, for bits of scandal about the great, or for philosophy on how to live and how to die. There is no more gratifying book to open anywhere. That is why no young reader should be disheartened by its length, although it is longer than three long novels. Its variety, its incessant bustle, keep the reader moving with it—not feverishly, but at any easy pace, with frequent musing stops by the way. Boswell had a principle for the writing of biography, and a phrase for his principle. It was "the minute selection of characteristical circumstances." No man has worked out that ideal of biography half so well as he did. His book is 1,400 pages of "characteristical circumstances."

But the inteniton of this chapter is to talk out of the book instead of about it. If praise of it has, as in the case of a certain just man, served only to antagonize, then let extracts allure.

This old edition before us has been well read. Behold how the volumes fall open at their owner's favorite passages. This one on cant he must find steadying, for the page on which it comes is working loose as a result of frequent opening of the book at

that page; the words on it were uttered by Johnson when he was seventy-four to Boswell, who had been canting fluently about his anxiety and vexation at the state of his country:

"My dear friend, clear your *mind* of cant. You may *talk* as other people do: you may say to a man, 'Sir, I am your most humble servant.' You are *not* his most humble servant. You may say, 'These are bad times; it is a melancholy thing to be reserved to such times.' You don't mind the times. You tell a man, 'I am sorry you had such bad weather the last day of your journey, and were so much wet.' You don't care six-pence whether he is wet or dry. You may *talk* in this manner; it is the mode of talking in Society: but don't *think* foolishly."

Boswell was always catching it. He would ask preposterous questions, well knowing their nature, in order to lure his sometimes surly and lethargic idol to speech. Often he succeeded, and he succeeded best when success was accompanied by a blast. Occasionally he veils his own identity when he records what happened, as here:

"He sometimes could not bear to be teased with questions. I was once present when a gentleman asked so many as, 'What did you do, Sir?' 'What did you say, Sir?' that he at last grew enraged, and said, 'I will not be put to the *question*. Don't you consider, Sir, that these are not the manners of a gentleman. I will not be baited with *what* and *why;* what is this? what is that? why is the cow's tail long? why is a fox's tail bushy?' The gentleman, who was a good deal out of countenance, said, 'Why, Sir, you are so good, that I venture to trouble you.' JOHNSON. 'Sir, my being so *good* is no reason why you should be so *ill.*'"

Here again it is almost certainly Boswell tempting fate, though he veils himself as "one of the company":

"On Friday, March 31, I supped with him and some friends at a tavern. One of the company attempted, with too much forwardness, to rally him on his late appearance at the theatre; but had reason to repent of his temerity. 'Why, Sir, did you go to Mrs. Abington's benefit? Did you see?' JOHNSON. 'No, Sir.' 'Did you hear?' JOHNSON. 'No, Sir.' 'Why, then, Sir, did you go?' JOHNSON. 'Because, Sir, she is a favorite of the publick; and when the publick cares the thousandth part for you that it does for her, I will go to your benefit, too.'"

To get the justification for the doctor's blistering finale in the foregoing you must recall that he was then sixty-six, half blind, and hard of hearing.

But he could be very gentle with Boswell upon occasion. There is an engaging picture of the pair a few evenings before Boswell was to sail away to "foreign parts," as he puts it, for study. Retrospect—and all Johnsonians are retrospective—loves to dwell upon the eager young man—Boswell was thirty years Johnson's junior—and the old scholar walking beneath the trees together after their tea:

"After tea he carried me to what he called his walk, which was a long narrow paved court in the neighborhood, overshadowed by some trees. There we sauntered a considerable time. . . . He roused me by manly and spirited conversation. He advised me, when settled in any place abroad, to study with an eagerness after knowledge . . . and when I was moving about, to read diligently in the great book of mankind."

"Read diligently in the great book of mankind." Johnson was always doing it. That is one reason James Boswell was enabled to make so great a book about Johnson. Mankind is in it.

The doctor had a genius for epitome. He could hit off differences and distinctions, and characteristics, racial, national, or individual, with turns of phrase that descended on the subject like triphammers. Boswell's book preserves an utterance of the Doctor's when he was seventy-one, which illustrates his triphammer style:

"An eminent foreigner, when he was shown the British museum, was very troublesome with many absurd inquiries. 'Now there, sir (said he), is the difference between an Englishman and a Frenchman. A Frenchman must always be talking, whether he knows anything of the matter or not; an Englishman is content to say nothing, when he has nothing to say.'"

And again—four years later:

"Johnson having argued for some time with a pertinacious gentleman, his opponent, who had talked in a very puzzling manner, happened to say, 'I don't understand you, sir'; upon which Johnson observed, 'Sir, I have found you an argument; but I am not obliged to find you an understanding.'"

Here is the old man at a party—at Mr. Cambridge's villa on the Thames—and Sir Joshua Reynolds, the painter, is one of the guests; while they are waiting for dinner this happens:

"No sooner had we made our bow to Mr. Cambridge, in his library, than Johnson ran eagerly to one side of the room, intent on poring over the backs of the books. . . . Mr. Cambridge, upon this, politely said, 'Dr. Johnson, . . . I have the same custom which I perceive you have. But it seems odd that one should have such a desire to look at the backs of books.' Johnson, ever ready for contest, instantly started from his revery, wheeled about, and answered: 'Sir, the reason is very plain. Knowledge is of two kinds. We know a subject ourselves, or we know where we can find information upon it. When we inquire into any subject, the first thing we have to do is to know what books have treated of it. This leads us to look at catalogues and the backs of books in libraries.' Sir Joshua observed to me the extraordinary promptitude with which Johnson flew upon an argument. 'Yes (said I), he has no formal preparation, no flourishing with his sword; he is through your body in an instant.'"

Even as he despised cant so he despised the finicky, and the affectation of aloofness from matters on which all of us are thrice a day genuinely intent:

"At supper this night he talked of good eating with uncommon satisfaction. 'Some people (said he) have a foolish way of not minding, or pretending not to mind, what they eat. For my part, I mind my belly very studiously and very carefully; for I look upon it, that he who does not mind his belly will hardly mind anything else.'"

And this, along the same lines of anti-cant:

"The notion of liberty amuses the people of England, and helps to keep off the *taedium vitae*. When a butcher tells you that *his heart bleeds for his country,* he has, in fact, no uneasy feeling."

On posing, preening persons he would literally lay hands. Once he quieted a flutterer with one word, the coinage of his seventy-fifth year:

"He had a great aversion to gesticulating in company. He called once to a gentleman who offended him in that point, 'Don't *attitudenise.*' And when another gentleman thought he was giving additional force to what he uttered, by expressive movements of his hands, Johnson fairly seized them, and held them down."

With the young, their needs and their betterment, he never lost touch or sympathy, saying once:

"I am always for getting a boy forward in his learning; for that is a sure good. I would let him at first read *any* English book which happens to engage his attention; because you have done a great deal when you have brought him to have entertainment from a book. He'll get better books afterwards."

Men of serious callings who permit themselves eccentricities either slight or conspicuous may ponder this:

"A physician being mentioned who had lost his practice, because his whimsically changing his religion had made people distrustful of him, I maintained that this was unreasonable, as religion is unconnected with medical skill. JOHNSON. 'Sir, it is not unreasonable; for when people see a man absurd in what they understand, they may conclude the same of him in what they do not understand.' "

Boswell's account of Johnson's interview with George III is, next to his account of the little dinner at Bookseller Dilly's, where Johnson met—and did not devour—John Wilkes, the agitator, the most finished piece of narrative in the book. That interview took place in 1767. The scholar was fifty-eight years old, the monarch twenty-nine. The account fills six pages (Oxford edition) of the book, and in the pithiness of its reproduction of conversation and in its subtle inclusion of pictorial detail, it is a masterpiece of reporting. At one point the king is asking the Doctor about new work he may have in hand. Boswell crowds in talk and comment on talk:

"Johnson said, he thought he had already done his part as a writer. 'I should have thought so too (said the King), if you had not written so well.' Johnson observed to me, upon this, that 'No man could have paid a handsomer compliment; and it was fit for a King to pay. It was decisive.' When asked by another friend, at Sir Joshua Reynolds', whether he made any reply to this high compliment, he answered, 'No, Sir. When the King had said it, it was to be so. It was not for me to bandy civilities with my Sovereign.' Perhaps no man who had spent his whole life in courts could have shown a more nice and dignified sense of true politeness than Johnson did in this instance."

At another point the king asks Johnson's opinion of a certain man of science, and Johnson answers candidly that the man has

ingenuity but no veracity, and continues in that strain until a thought pulls him up sharply. What that thought was Boswell says the Doctor told them all later;

> "I now (said Johnson to his friends, when relating what had passed), began to consider that I was depreciating this man in the estimation of his Sovereign, and thought it was time for me to say something that might be more favorable."

The courtliness and the goodness of heart in that "began to consider that I was depreciating this man to his sovereign" is as endearing as it is arresting. Long years ago it brought an o'er voluble youth upstanding with the thought that not less uncourtly and unfair would it be to depreciate a man to his employer, and he then resolved never to do it.

Among books not designedly admonitory there is no more salutary book of conduct than this spacious, wise old book that shows you at full length the spacious, wise old man who sturdily laid down the law in letters and in morals to eighteenth century England.

# XXIX

## "MOTHER GOOSE MELODIES" AND THEIR AUTHOR

(First American Collection published in 1719)

*Of the many who must recollect the nursery jingles of their youth, how few in number are those who have ever suspected their immense age, or that they were ever more than unmeaning nonsense; far less that their creation belongs to a period before that at which the authentic records of our history commence. Yet there is no exaggeration in such a statement. We find the same trifles which erewhile lulled or amused the English infant are current in slightly varied forms throughout the North of Europe; we know that they have been sung in the northern countries for centuries, and that there has been no modern outlet for their dissemination across the German Ocean. The most natural inference is to adopt the theory of a Teutonic origin, and thus give to every genuine child-rhyme found in England and Sweden an immense antiquity. There is nothing improbable in the supposition, for the preservation of the relics of primitive literature often bears an inverse ratio to their importance.*

*Having . . . shown that the nursery has an archaeology, the study of which may eventually lead to important results, the jingles and songs of our childhood are defended from the imputation of excessive frivolity.*

JAMES O. HALLIWELL-PHILLIPS.

No other American authoress and compiler is a better seller or better authenticated than the Boston dame whose works form the first book you ever looked into. This lady, born Foster, christened Elizabeth, and married on July 5, 1692, at the age of twenty-seven, to the widower Isaac Vergoose of Boston, was as actual a figure in the lives of the seven grandchildren to whom she sang her "Mother Goose's Melodies," which her son-in-law published in 1719, as was the doting grandmother who, say half a century ago, was chucking you under your then meaningless chin, snuggling her nose in a pink neck that had not

Three wise men of Gotham,
Went to sea in a bowl.
If the bowl had been stronger,
My song had been longer.

known the yoke of care, and peering fondly into eyes that were trustful. As she dandled you on her knee she sang to you of many things which had been imparted to her by Mrs. Isaac Vergoose's book, and, supplementing that lore with copious compliment, she assured you that you were the most beautiful baby since babies began. "Mother Goose's Melodies" is the book of the time in our earthly pilgrimage when our pulchritude was unanimously conceded by persons who never since have thought so well of us. As such, one regards it in later life with a certain contrition not compatible with the carefree spirit of the things in it.

Like Thomas à Kempis, Mrs. Vergoose lived to be ninety-two years old. Her book—roughly—has been a best seller nearly half as long as his has. Both will continue to live—the first, because man begins as a child; the second, because he spends the rest of his days erring, and repenting, and seeking the way back to the innocency of childhood. His name for that destination is heaven.

Ding—dong—bell, the cat's in the well,
Who put her in? little Johnny Green.
Who pulled her out? great Johnny Stout.
What a naughty boy was that,
To drown poor pussy cat;
Who never did him any harm,
And killed the mice in his father's barn.

For 208 years "Mother Goose's Melodies" has been among the premier best sellers. It never was more so than now. It is a staple item in "the trade," and if the descendants of Mrs. Isaac Vergoose could have retained to this day a copyright on her works, they would now be among the richest families in the western world. Son-in-law Thomas Fleet, the Boston printer of ballads, pamphlets, and small books for children (shop in Pudding Lane, which now is Devonshire Street), sold his first edition of mother-in-law's rhymes for "two coppers." To-day you may buy the book in a form good enough for any republican nursery for a quarter, or you can go as high as five dollars.

Via the patient copyist the managers of the book department of Field's in Chicago were asked for data about "Mother Goose" as an item of the trade. As they know books as well as sell them, the copyist came home with a lapful of facts. For example, that store carries *from fifteen to twenty-five editions* of "Mother Goose" in stock. It has them with historical and biographical introductions and with Kate Greenaway's exquisite pictures. There is the beautiful Rackham edition, published by the Century company, and the sumptuous Volland edition, and the Rand-McNally edition, which costs two dollars and is the kind of book that, in the language of the trade, "sells at sight," which means that it is so obviously what it pretends to be that it is a boon to distracted uncles doing their Christmas shopping. Houghton-Mifflin publish an edition which contains pages of antiquarian lore about the Vergooses and the Fleets and their descendants, and is dedicated thus:

The man in the moon
came down too
soon
To inquire the way
to Norridge;
The man in the south,
he burnt his
mouth
With eating cold
plum porridge.

"To JOHN FLEET ELIOT, The Great-Great-Grandson of Elizabeth Goose, Known Wherever The English Language Is Spoken As MOTHER GOOSE, This Collection of her Melodies Is Inscribed, As An Acknowledgment Of His Kindness In Supplying The Materials From Which the Account Of His And Her Family Has Been Derived."

And then the Boyd Smith edition—pictures and text both good—and the Jessie Wilcox Smith edition and the Blanche Fisher Wright edition, and editions with music scores in them.

Good painters have bestowed their best on this book. Why? Because it is so amazingly imaginative. Call it doggerel if you will, but the solid fact remains that nearly every stanza in it fairly leaps with bold, comical or grotesque imaginative touches. The old lady—though she was only fifty when her daughter, Mrs. Elizabeth Fleet, began presenting her with grandchildren who cried for

her rhymes—was no routine rhymster. Is there anywhere a more audacious concept than:

"Hey diddle diddle, the cat and the fiddle;
The cow jumped over the moon!
The little dog laughed to see such sport,
And the dish ran away with the spoon!"

Logical, too. Who would not, like the little dog, laugh to see didos so tremendous as the cow's vaulting? Nor does the abrupt elopement of the dish with the spoon seem irrational under the circumstances. The lines are vibrant with the unusual. But how marvelously compact!

"Hiccory, diccory, dock" appealed to me from earliest years, and still does. I do not know why it did at first, but I think it does now because of its searching note of inevitability—nay, more, of implacability:

"Hiccory, diccory, dock,
The mouse run up the clock;
The clock struck one, and down he run,
Hiccory, diccory, dock."

Time and doom, that hold us all, and end us all at last, are in that. There is no gainsaying it. The mouse *run,* as Mrs. Vergoose would have it. Was there aught else for him to do but run down when the appointed hour struck? It is the drama of the Greeks in four lines, the Olympians intoning "Hiccory, diccory, dock"—inscrutable, solemn—the muttering of fate in it. And how sure is the poetess' mastery of rhythm here. It is amazingly flexible. You can time it with the fairy galloping of a Swiss watch, and it makes the same beat; or you can measure it by the slow ticking of the great, sad-faced clock at the end of the hall, and with that grave voice it likewise synchronizes. In those lines poetry found its pendulum, in a manner of speaking.

Tom, Tom, the piper's son,
Stole a pig, and away he run;
The pig was eat,
And Tom was beat,
And Tom ran crying down the street.

Ride a cock-horse to
Banbury-cross,
To see what Tommy
can buy:
A penny white loaf, a
penny white cake,
And a two-penny ap-
ple pie.

But criticism is disarmed by all Mrs. Vergoose's masterpieces; for, if one attempted criticism in any captious way, there would come whispering to the critic from out of his past a little voice, infantile but honest, and it would say, "How dare you! How dare you be captious now—you who once wondered and thrilled and laughed over these deft lines, so harmonious and so bold that no pretentious poetry of your later reading has been able to drive them from your mind?"

I do not dare, and hasten to add that I think Mrs. Vergoose's volume an excellent lesson-book. It prompts to endless speculation and question.

"The man in the south, he burnt his mouth
With eating cold plum porridge."

"But grandmamma, how could the man *burn* his mouth with eating *cold* plum porridge?" For more than two centuries grandmothers have been bidden to answer that. The answer is in Xenophon's "Anabasis"—if grandmother only knew it.

And the geography! If every "Where-is-that?" of a bright child were painstakingly answered as "Mother Goose's Melodies" is being read to him, that child would have a pretty good knowledge of the interesting world he has come into. Do you know how many important places and people Mrs. Vergoose brings into her poems? Here are a few:

Babylon, London, Charing-cross, Banbury-cross, Gotham (there is a fascinating story to tell a child out of the reign of King John in connection with that reference), Norwich (Norridge), St. Ives, St. Dunstan, St. Swithin, Spain, Queen Anne and her Danish consort, Prince George; King William III and his wife (a whole momentous chapter of English history in that rhyme), and General Monk (more English history), and so on. And what really are cockle shells? And what other celebrated poet besides Mrs. Vergoose puts the accent on the second syllable of contrary? Answer-

ing that when you have read your child the rhyme about the opinionated Mary, you will also have introduced him to a great line of Milton's, for Milton says of fame:

"Fame, if not double-faced is double-mouthed,
And with contrary blast proclaims most deeds."

As Goethe said, it does no harm to know something. Give your child an early chance. If you can do it along with fun, so much the happier. Here are other bits of lore to be gleaned by attentive study of "Mother Goose": Taffy, in Mrs. Vergoose's celebrated indictment of that acquisitive Welshman, is but the Welsh provincial pronunciation of Davy, and Bobby Shafto was a real character in English county history, and the expletive "marry," is a corruption of the Virgin's name.

It is to be remembered that the title "Mother Goose's Melodies," has become a catch-all for many childlike folk rhymes that Mrs. Vergoose never wrote, and that is why one edition of the Melodies so varies from another. Succeeding rhymesters and publishers popped in new or older matter to make a bigger book. Of all the editions circulated in our time, the edition of 1833 is probably the nearest to the veritable original "Mother Goose." I say "circulated in our time," because so lately as 1905 it was published in facsimile by Messrs. Lothrop, Lee & Shepard of Boston, and from that facsimile the pictures which embellish this chapter were taken.

That facsimile contains 152 melodies. The modern editions contain many more.

Every one of the editions—the cheap, the costly, the unpretentious and the fine—are instinct with the history of the race that accounts itself old and takes itself seriously, but is ever young and ever wanting jingles.

Dear, foolish little book of nonsense! In the heart of every man at once a joke and a treasure! Artless rhymes endeared to us all by every sweet memory of childhood and innocence and happiness; by fond ties soon loosed and never to be renewed, the ties that bound us to our age of innocence. With impatient hands we push the book away when we think we are getting to be a big boy. 'Tis gone, 'tis gone, and nevermore will come again—that white age of each of us—our age of innocence.

# XXX

## MARK TWAIN'S "ADVENTURES OF HUCKLEBERRY FINN"

(Written during the eight years from 1876 to 1884. First published in 1884)

*THE FLAVOR OF THE GREATEST OF AMERICAN TALES:*

*"All kings is mostly rapscallions."*—"The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn," Chapter XXIII.

*"So the king he blattered along."*—Chapter XXV.

*"The funeral sermon was very good, but pison long and tiresome."*—Chapter XXVII.

Tom Sees a Ghost—*"His mouth opened up like a trunk, and stayed so."*—Chapter XXXIII.

The King's Cross—*"Trouble has brung these gray hairs and this premature balditude."*—Chapter XIX.

*"When the place was packed full the undertaker he slid around in his black gloves with his softly soothering ways . . . and making no more sound than a cat . . . and there warn't no more smile to him than there is to a ham."*—Chapter XXVII.

*"Then pretty soon Sherburn sort of laughed; not the pleasant kind, but the kind that makes you feel like when you are eating bread that's got sand in it."*—Chapter XXII.

*"Hain't we got all the fools in town on our side? And ain't that a big enough majority in any town?"*—Chapter XXVI.

*"The nigger kind of smiled around graduly over his face, like when you heave a brick bat in a mud puddle."*—Chapter XXXIV.

*". . . and here comes the old man . . . looking as absent-minded as year before last."*—Chapter XXXVII.

*". . . the sky was darking up, and the lightning beginning to wink and flitter . . . and the wind swished and swushed along, and the lightning come brisker and brisker, and the thunder boomed."*—Chapter XXIX.

*". . . and sometimes I lifted a chicken that warn't roosting comfortable and took him along. Pop always said, take a chicken when you get a chance, because if you don't want him yourself you can easy find somebody that does, and a good deed ain't ever forgot."*—Chapter XII.

AUNT POLLY'S PULCHRITUDE—*"If she warn't standing right there, just inside the door, looking as sweet and contented as an angel half full of pie, I wish I may never!"*—Chapter XLII.

*"I think he died afterward. . . . Yes, I remember now, he* did *die. Mortification set in, and they had to amputate him. But it didn't save him. . . . He turned blue all over, and died in the hope of a glorious resurrection."*—Chapter XXXII.

*". . . and there warn't anybody at the church, except maybe a hog or two, for there warn't any lock on the door, and hogs like a puncheon floor in summer time because it's cool. If you notice, most folks don't go to church only when they've got to; but a hog is different."*—Chapter XVII.

TOM SAWYER'S POLITESSE—*"He warn't a boy to meeky along up that yard like a sheep; no, he come ca'm and important, like a ram. When he got a-front of us he lifts his hat ever so gracious and dainty, like it was the lid of a box that had butterflies asleep in it and he didn't want to disturb them."*—Chapter XXXIII.

THE SUPERFLUOUS QUANTITY—*"If I had a yaller dog that didn't know no more than a person's conscience does I would pison him. It takes up more room than all the rest of a person's insides, and yet ain't no good, nohow. Tom Sawyer he says the same."*—Chapter XXXIII.

THE POWER OF MUSIC—*"And the minute the words were out of his mouth somebody over in the crowd struck up the doxolojer, and everybody joined in it with all their might, and it just warmed you up and made you feel as good as church letting out. Music* is *a good thing; and after all that soul-butter and hog-wash I never see it freshen up things so, and sound so honest and bully."*—Chapter XXV.

DEDUCTION—*"When we was at dinner, didn't you see a nigger man go in there with some vittles?"*

*"Yes."*

*"What did you think the vittles was for?"*

*"For a dog."*

*"So'd I. Well, it wasn't for a dog."*

*"Why?"*

*"Because part of it was a watermelon."*

*"So it was—I noticed it. Well, it does beat all that I never thought about a dog not eating watermelon. It shows how a body can see and don't see at the same time."*—Chapter XXXIV.

WHY is it that grown men take up this book every four or five years and reread it with a zest that familiarity cannot blur, and lose themselves in it with a completeness which for a little while the cares of life cannot disturb?

In the Chicago *Daily News* of September 20, 1922, appeared an account of the doubts which beset one of the world's greatest merchandisers when, in making a list of "Fifty Books Worth Owning" he had to choose between Mark Twain's "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" and Mark Twain's "Adventures of Tom Sawyer."

James Simpson had confidently written thirty-two titles, but when he selected "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" as number thirty-three he added this note:

"I hesitated a long time between 'Huckleberry Finn' and 'Tom Sawyer.'"

James Simpson is fifty-three years old, a Scot and a Presbyterian, and he has the affairs of two blocks of skyscraping stores on his mind. Considering his Glasgow origin and his present responsibilities the picture of him dropping work to "hesitate a long time" between the two romances is not without interest. It would have pleased Mark Twain.

What, then, is the lure of the book which James Simpson finally chose?

I think that it is the richness and vividness of its detail. Most Americans in their fifties know the machinery of its plot by heart. They breathlessly followed it as long ago as the eighteen-eighties when the book was new and they were in their 'teens.

It is not the attraction of the plot which draws them back after all these years, and then draws them on and on until they again have read all their favorite chapters.

It is, in part, this kind of writing which lures them—the spacious, somnolent river scene, majestic and homely, that comes at the opening of Chapter XIX—just after the tragedy of the Granger-Shepherdson feud and just before Huck and Nigger Jim meet the extravaganza king and the duke: the river is a mile and a half wide, and Huck and Jim are "lazying along" on their raft:

"A little smoke couldn't be noticed now, so we would take some fish off of the lines and cook up a hot breakfast. And afterwards we would watch the lonesomeness of the river, and kind of lazy along, and by and by lazy off to sleep. Wake up by and by, and look to see what done it, and maybe see a steamboat coughing along up-stream, so far off towards the other side you couldn't tell nothing about her only whether she was a stern-wheel or side-wheel; then for about an hour there wouldn't be nothing to hear nor nothing to see—just solid lonesomeness. Next you'd see a raft sliding by, away off yonder, and maybe a galoot on it chopping, because they're most always doing it on a raft; you'd see the ax flash and come down—you don't hear nothing; you see that ax go up again, and by the time it's above the man's head then you hear the *k'chunk!*—it had took all that time to come over the water. So we would put in the day, lazying around, listening to the stillness. Once there was a thick fog, and the rafts and things that went by was beating tin pans so the steamboats wouldn't run over them. A scow or a raft went by so close we could hear them talking and cussing and laughing—heard them plain; but we couldn't see no sign of them; it made you feel crawly; it was like spirits carrying on that way in the air. Jim said he believed it was spirits; but I says:

"'No; spirits wouldn't say, "Dern the dern fog."'"

If you have traveled much in foreign parts you will know that there are seven Americans of fiction—seven of your countrymen of the world of the imagination—who are known abroad as well as Ulysses, Hamlet, Faust and Don Quixote are known. Two of those Americans are Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn. The other five are Rip Van Winkle, Leather Stocking, Uncle Tom, Uncle Remus and Benjamin Franklin's Poor Richard.

Tom and Huck have become world-citizens because of the enormous reality of the scenes amid which they move. In a sense they are not the central figures of the story but the puppets of its central figure. That figure is the most insistent force on this continent—the Mississippi River. The humans of the tale are wisps and straws with which the river plays as it listeth. Upon its current, whimsical, ruthless, now ugly, now beautiful, Mark Twain turns adrift a white boy aged fourteen (Huck), and a negro slave ("Nigger Jim") whose purpose is to escape to the Illinois shore where he will be free, and to work in the North until he has saved sufficient money to buy the freedom of his wife and child.

The period is a summer in the decade 1834-44—probably nearer '44 than '34, and the scene is eleven hundred miles of the Mississippi and its bordering towns and plantations in Missouri, Illinois, Kentucky, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Mississippi.

That is the huge canvas of the story.

To grasp its epic scale, study the map.

To set a boy and a servant adrift on 1,100 miles of one of the world's great rivers; to cast them now and again ashore in half a dozen commonwealths which in any other land would be premier kingdoms; to have them encounter gentry, and harlequins, and gamesters, and boatmen, and wastrels, and drunkards, and feudists, and good women; to make them face peril with a good heart and absurdities with a quiet, philosophic mind, and meet with fortitude hard tests of honor; and finally to end their voyage with a madcap extravaganza directed by their friend Tom Sawyer—such is the far flung scenario of "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn." Irvin Cobb was right when he called it "the Odyssey of the Mississippi."

Mark Twain printed a warning "Notice" on a prefatory page of his story. It was:

"Persons attempting to find a motive in this narrative will be prosecuted; persons attempting to find a moral in it will be banished; persons attempting to find a plot in it will be shot."

The story is nevertheless close compact of motive, moral and plot.

The motive is the exaltation of the new spirit of a new empire—the spirit of what has been called Mark's "sound, breezy, Mississippi Valley Americanism."

The moral is the preciousness and beauty of loyalty.

The plot is the old, old Homeric mechanism which, ever producing fresh surprises under the magic touch of poets and tellers of tales, shows men how other men in hard straits have failed or have succeeded in their struggle with moral issues, have come to shipwreck and shame or have got safe ashore.

In spite of Mark's threat of banishment to persons attempting to find a moral in "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" the fact is that its moral element remains the most important element of

a book which mincing, meddling librarians in presumably rational American communities once banned from the shelves on the plea that its tone would degrade the youthful mind.

Huck is an emblem of untutored loyalty. He is an authentic expression of the kind of American that leads forlorn hopes; our Starks and Picketts and Custers and Hobsons and Lindberghs; the kind that says, "Dern the dern fog," and presses on—not unwilling to rattle tin pans if that will make for either exhilaration or safety. No heroics in Huck, but genuine, beautiful heroism, inarticulate withal.

Huck's character is grounded in the virtue which is the most comprehensive of the virtues because the perfect practice of it necessarily brings into play most of the other virtues. He is loyal. As a moral figure he is glorified by his gallant exercise of the virtue which honors alike him who possesses it and him who benefits by it.

Huck's decision to be loyal in spite of hell, a region concerning which his views were vivid, is made known in a chapter that is one of the greatest unfoldings of spiritual stress in American literature.

Even as Jacob wrestled with the angel, this boy wrestles over the four-line note to Miss Watson that will send Jim back to slavery, whither every good white boy in ante-bellum Missouri was bound to send a runaway negro.

He wrestles through three pages that sweat and moan with his anguish—"I wore my head sore" . . . "the more I studied about this the more my conscience got to grinding me" . . . "here was the plain hand of Providence slapping me in the face" . . . "it made me shiver" . . . "lost and going to hell."

Then the great decision:

"It was a close place. I took it up [the note to Miss Watson] and held it in my hand. I was a-trembling, because I'd got to decide, forever, betwixt two things, and I knowed it. I studied a minute, sort of holding my breath, and then says to myself:

" 'All right, then, I'll *go* to hell'—and tore it up.

"It was awful thoughts and awful words, but they was said. And I let them stay said; and never thought no more about reforming. I shoved the whole thing out of my head, and said I would take up wick-

edness again, which was in my line, being brung up to it, and the other warn't. And for a starter I would go to work and steal Jim out of slavery again; and if I could think up anything worse, I would do that, too, because as long as I was in, and in for good, I might as well go the whole hog."

Forthwith this river waif steps in with the immortals of fiction —and of reality. John Bunyan in Bedford gaol never fought a harder fight, or a better. This uncouth power has not been surpassed in native art.

## XXXI

## HOW "HUCKLEBERRY FINN" WAS WRITTEN

THE book which the London Athenæum called "one of the six greatest books ever written in America" not only hung fire for eight years but once stood a fair chance of ending in the fire.

In 1876, when he was forty years old, Mr. Clemens wrote to William Dean Howells:

"Elmira, Aug. 9, 1876.

" . . . a month ago I began another boys' book—more to be at work than anything else. I have written four hundred pages on it—therefore it is very nearly half done. It is Huck Finn's Autobiography. I like it only tolerably well, as far as I have got, and may possibly pigeonhole or burn the MS. when it is done. . . .

"Love to yez.

"Yrs. ever,

"Mark."

Four years passed. "Huck" still was only half finished. Mr. Clemens turned the story over in his mind and had some idea of publishing it and "The Prince and the Pauper" in a single volume. "But Livy [his wife] says they're not" [to be so published], he wrote to his sister, adding "and by George I she ought to know." She did. "The Prince and the Pauper" appeared by itself.

Three more years passed.

The scene is still Elmira. Now the fit is on him. His zest in the old MS. has returned. He is working rapidly on "Huck" and by a method all his own. On July 20, 1883, he writes to Howells:

"I wrote 4000 words to-day and I touch 3000 and upwards pretty often, and don't fall below 2600 any working day. And when I get fagged out, I lie abed a couple of days and read and smoke, and then go it again for 6 or 7 days. I . . . am away along in a big one [book] that I half-finished two or three years ago. I expect to complete it in a month or six weeks or two months more. And I shall *like* it, whether anybody else does or not. It's a kind of companion to Tom Sawyer."

Four thousand words a day means about a dozen sparsely paragraphed pages of the Messrs. Harper's limp leather edition of "Huckleberry Finn." You thus can see that it was filigree work and done with great care. Or don't you see it? Well, this may give you a gauge: An expert reporter, having his matter well in hand, can knock off—on the typewriter—a thousand word (or one column) average article in from half an hour to forty minutes. By "average" is meant an article that presents no intricacies of fact and requires no special "treatment."

Mark felt that 4,000 words a day—with the two-day interlude in bed every seven days—was good progress and he was cheered by it. The spell was on him and, like Hamlet, he said, "'tis as easy as lying"—said just about that to his "Ma" in a letter he posted to Keokuk the day after the letter to Howells:

"Elmira, July 21, '83.

"Private.

"Dear Ma and Orion and Mollie: . . . I haven't had such booming working-days for many years. I am piling up manuscript in a really astonishing way. I believe I shall complete, in two months, a book which I have been fooling over for 7 years. This summer it is no more trouble to me to write than it is to lie. . . .

"Hello, supper's ready. Love to all. Good-by,

"Saml."

They were long days he put in. Toward the end of August, '83, we find him again writing to Howells:

" . . . I have wrought from breakfast till 5:15 P.M. six days in the week, and once or twice I smouched a Sunday when the boss [his wife] wasn't looking. Nothing is half so good as literature hooked on Sunday, on the sly."

And so at the end of 1884, when Mark was forty-eight years old, "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" at last came forth in England and America. The orders during the first weeks of sale were 50,000 copies. It has been a best seller ever since. In 1907, when detailed calculations were made, it had passed in sales all Mark's books except "Innocents Abroad."

But before its appearance "Huck" had to undergo the ordeal of censorship by "the boss." Both MS. and proofs went to Mrs.

Clemens to be what Susy Clemens, in the biography of her father that she wrote when she was a little girl, called "expergated."

Said Susy:

"I remember so well, with what pangs of regret we used to see her turn down the leaves of the pages, which meant that some delightfully terrible part must be scratched out. And I remember one part pertickularly which was perfectly fascinating it was so terrible, that Clara and I used to delight in and oh, with what despair we saw mama turn down the leaf on which it was written, we thought the book would almost be ruined without it. But we gradually came to think as mama did."

Mark later wrote of this discipline:

"I do not remember what the condemned phrase was. It had much company, and they all went to the gallows."

It was good discipline for Mark. He was not gross, but delicacy was not his fetish, and he dearly loved the thunder-roll of Mississippi River profanity. It was Mr. Howells who ordered all the profanity out of the book and it was Mrs. Clemens who put it out. The verities do not suffer as a consequence. Robert Louis Stevenson, whose taste was impeccable, would not admit an oath to the pages of "Treasure Island," yet in no book of desperate deeds does one more assuredly get the "feel" of the language of men whose words are—or seem to be—as wicked as their deeds.

Having undergone censorship in the family circle, and survived it, "Huck" faced a censorship from without, which he also survives. It makes one of the most ludicrous chapters in American literary history and it began where of all places it should not have begun—in the town of Henry David Thoreau. The Concord public library elected to make an egregious ninny of itself and in 1885 banned the book as "trash and suitable only for the slums."

"A rattling tip-top puff," wrote Mark to his publisher, adding "That will sell 25,000 copies for us."

The Concord Free Trade club, wishful to extend comfort to the (un)afflicted, immediately elected Mark to honorary membership.

Often, during the next two decades, expulsion overtook "Huck" and "Tom"—notably in Brooklyn, which expelled both books from

the children's room of a public library. To one of the librarians who had stood against stupidity, Mark wrote:

"Most honestly do I wish that I could say a softening word in defense of Huck's character since you wish it, but really, in my opinion, it is no better than those of Solomon, David, and the rest of the sacred brotherhood."

And again, when similar antics were being performed:

" . . . when a Library expels a book of mine and leaves an unexpurgated Bible lying around where unprotected youth and age can get hold of it, the deep unconscious irony of it delights me and doesn't anger me."

Soon the rancor goes out of such episodes. They become interesting and instructive sidelights in the annals of a people's culture—inspiriting, too, for the trend seems always toward greater rather than less sense.

Contrasts such as only the years can work out are the essence of such instruction and in them the profit lies. The period of the mincing censors passed and the period of the stylists and the thinkers arrived. With them "Huck" came into its own as a work of art and of morals.

Thus:

"As imperishably substantial as 'Robinson Crusoe,'" Stuart P. Sherman; "A marvelously accurate portrayal of a whole civilization," Brander Matthews; "A nearly flawless gem of romance and humor," Andrew Lang; "The greatest piece of American fiction," John Macy; "The two greatest American stories—'The Scarlet Letter' and 'Huckleberry Finn'," H. S. Canby.

"It is a book," said Robert Louis Stevenson, "I have read four times, and am quite ready to begin again to-morrow." An Englishman on a continental train, recognizing Mark, said, "Mr. Clemens, I would give £10 not to have read your 'Huckeberry Finn'!"

"Why so?" said Mark.

"So that I could again have the great pleasure of reading it for the first time."

The book to all relishing souls is not a book. It is an ex-

perience. The reason for that lies in its variety and its verity. Not alone to the lover of books and of mankind does it speak with intimate voice, but to the historian, the etymologist and the geographer. You think that perhaps that is extravagant. You will never know how true it is until you cruise down the Mississippi—say from Keokuk to Baton Rouge—with this book in hand.

Then its folklore, its occasional words that now are either local or nearly obsolete but are racy of that fecund soil, its scenic bits, and its phrases that are as impellent to reverie as the flicker of the firelight in a darkening room—all will stir your fancy. Some of the words are clown-children with serious parents—"Jim's eyes *bugged* out," "dangersome," "fittin," "soothering," "swushed," "yellocution," "bullinesses," "soul-butter," "blattered." There are dozens. And the king's "balditude" ought to go into the dictionaries.

The reality of it all is not the routine reality of the actual, but the true reality of poetry. Mark once told Brander Matthews that there was no episode in either "Tom" or "Huck" which had not "actually happened, either to me or to one or another of the boys I have known." What Mark did with those actual happenings was to touch them with the mellow light of forty years of fond recollection. The result is eleven hundred miles of the kind of reality which, in Professor Stuart Sherman's fine phrase, expresses "the half-barbaric charm in that gray wilderness of moving water."

Forty-three years have passed since Mark Twain's book started those ante-bellum boys on the epic voyage down the great river. Both Huck and Tom—in real life the Tom Blankenship and the Sam Clemens of Hannibal, Mo., would be more than ninety years old were they living now. But how can one think of Huck and Tom as old men! Long ago they started on the greatest adventure of all, but the light—the golden light of youth and of joy and of those first blithe, wondering experimentations we make in the art of living—follows them always. Far, far have they wandered into the hearts of men and their mission has been benign: Youth they have exhilarated; old age they have refreshed. The breezes of happiness and high audacity sit ever in their sails and

their craft salutes the white promontories of poetry's magic strand.

A little while with confident feet they walked thereon, then vanished into the shadows. But young they still are, for the wand of a poet touched them and they who once are touched with that glamour are ever young, and they ever diffuse the spirit of youth among the weary ones that trudge by weary ways. And if they die of age they still die young.

In the sunlight of their land—the land of a boy's homely poetry and untutored musings—let us leave them:

"When I got there it was all still and Sunday-like, and hot and sunshiny; the hands was gone to the fields; and there was them kind of faint dronings of bugs and flies in the air that makes it seem so lonesome and like everybody's dead and gone; and if a breeze fans along and quivers the leaves it makes you feel mournful, because you feel like it's spirits whispering—spirits that's been dead ever so many years—and you always think they're talking about *you*. As a general thing it makes a body wish *he* was dead, too, and done with it all. . . . I went around and clumb over the back stile by the ash-hopper, and started for the kitchen. When I got a little ways I heard the dim hum of a spinning-wheel wailing along up and sinking along down again; and then I knowd for certain I wished I was dead—for that *is* the lonesomest sound in the whole world."

## XXXII

## MOLIÈRE'S "TARTUFFE, OR THE HYPOCRITE"

(First acted at court in May, 1664; first public presentation of the play in its complete form February 5, 1669)

### *STRACHEY WROTE THIS LONG BEFORE HE WAS FAMOUS*

*Tartufe* [*Mr. Strachey uses the less familiar spelling*] *perhaps the greatest of all Molière's characters, presents a less complex figure even than such a slight sketch as Shakespeare's Malvolio. Who would have foreseen Malvolio's exquisitely preposterous address to Jove? In Tartufe there are no such surprises. He displays three qualities, and three only—religious hypocrisy, lasciviousness, and the love of power; and there is not a word that he utters which is not impregnated with one or all of these. Beside the vast elaboration of a Falstaff, he seems, at first sight, hardly more solid than some astounding silhouette, yet—such was the power and intensity of Molière's art—the more we look, the more difficult we shall find it to be certain that Tartufe is a less tremendous creation even than Falstaff himself.*

*For, indeed, it is in his characters that Molière's genius triumphs most. His method is narrow, but it is deep. He rushes to the essentials of a human being—tears out his vitals, as it were—and, with a few repeated master-strokes, transfixes the naked soul. His flashlight never fails: the affected fop, the ignorant doctor, the silly tradesman, the heartless woman of fashion—on these, and on a hundred more, he turns it, inexorably smiling, just at the compromising moment; then turns it off again, to leave us with a vision that we can never forget.*

*. . . . More remarkable still is Molière's portrayal of the eminence of the human spirit in the case of Tartufe. Here it is vice in its meanest and most repulsive forms which has become endowed with an awful grandeur. Tartufe, the hypocrite, the swindler, the seducer of his benefactor's wife, looms out on us with the kind of horrible greatness that Milton's Satan might have had if he had come to live with a bourgeois family in seventeenth-century France.*

("Landmarks in French Literature," 1912.) LYTTON STRACHEY.

IT is the year 1667. An ecclesiastical Ku Klux Klan is the pest of France, and has been for a decade. It is equipped with all

the attributes that make for mischief and intolerance. It is mean, arrogant, self-seeking, ruthless, sanctimonious, self-righteous. It is at once rampant and covert. It pervades homes, gliding subtly therein and then taking command. It wraps itself in the cloak of religion, and it is fluent in the catchwords of sanctity. It influences gullible men and trustful women. It meddles in betrothals and marriages, seeks for its elect the dowries of girls, sets husbands and wives by the ears, imposes penances where there have been no deviations save self-respect and independence—the egregious deviations to this coterie—and fixes punishments where it safely can execute them.

Even the king, the most autocratic monarch in the occident, is afraid of these people.

Jean-Baptiste Poquelin (known then to all Paris by his stage name of Molière and known to the ages by it now) has written a play about them, but he cannot obtain the royal permission to produce it in public and in its complete form. For the king is afraid. The ecclesiastical Ku Klux has put the fear of its kind of a god into a young heart that, certes, has no cause to fear anything else on earth.

The actor-manager-dramatist, great, skillful and brave in all three capacities, had written this play about a specimen faux dévot of the Ku Klux, whom he named Tartuffe, four or five years, probably, before this summer of 1667 that we for the moment are living and fretting in with him. Several times in 1664 he had been permitted to enact it in an unfinished form at court for the king's pleasure, but, presented in a backstairs, underhand way though it was then, it nevertheless made trouble for all concerned in countenancing it. The type of serpent that Molière had drawn in Tartuffe was instantly recognized. Some said you did not have to go outside the circle of the king's family to find variants of the type, and such gossip made matters no easier for Louis XIV, especially as Molière in this first trying-out of the first three acts of the comedy which the world now knows as "Tartuffe" had called it "The Hypocrite."

Now it is August of 1667. The king is away in Flanders. Molière takes a chance. He takes a chance because he knows

that at heart the king is with him. So he announces the play for performance at his theater, the best in Paris, but, as a sop to the Ku Klux, he changes its name to "The Impostor."

If there had been trouble in the palace over the private performances of three years ago, now is triple trouble over this public performance. The chief of police—his name was de Lamoignon—immediately orders the theater closed. The blasts of bigotry are redoubled. The nature of the clamor you may judge from a strain of it that has come down to this day: a clerical busybody of the name of Roullé who was curé of St. Bartholomew's said that the judicious thing to do with Molière was to "send him through earthly to eternal fires."

But Molière refuses to be frightened by either the chief of police or the priest. Although he was a courtly man, of great charm and elegance of manner, he also was a fighter. All his life he fought sham.

The king is tented in the mud around Lille, laying siege to that noble city which ultimately is to surrender to him. At the age of twenty-nine he is occupied with his first campaign—that dazzling campaign in Flanders which, as he had to have a pretext, he has undertaken on behalf of his Spanish wife's alleged inheritances in the Low Countries. It is called "the Queen's War."

Molière summons two of his actors, one of them La Grange by name, name of the other not come down to us, and says to them, "You go up Lille way, find his majesty, tell him of what the president of the board of police has done and of the ban of excommunication the archbishop of Paris has laid upon 'all Christians who shall act in "Le Tartuffe," or read it, or hear it read.' Tell him that, and implore him to act *tout de suite!*" The actors go.

What the greatest men in the France of two centuries and a half ago thought of the theater is shown by the fact that those two actors, coming in the midst of the young king's first and momentous campaign, are promptly given access to him and are graciously received by him—and no man living can be more gracious. He has made graciousness a fine art. It is his best religion.

But in this case he temporizes. He had made temporizing a fine art, also.

He stands by the police and the clerics, and declares that the performances cannot go on. But "orally," as Mr. Chatfield-Taylor puts it in his noble life of Molière, "orally" he promises that "eventually" the play shall be performed, adding, "You must give me time to consider the matter."

He keeps his word. He was always scrupulous about that, when it perfectly suited his and the kingdom's interest to be so.

Nearly eighteen months pass before the royal mind is made up and permission given for the public performance of "Tartuffe."

The great day comes; evening, or late afternoon, for they went to the theater much earlier then than we do now, of February 5, 1669. Never in Paris such excitement over a play. The five years of waiting, of clamor, of savage Ku Kluxism, of backstairs performances of the first three acts of the play, of private readings of it in the salons of great nobles, of bickerings over it in the royal household, have been of enormous advertising value. The press in front of the theater is terrific; "cloaks," says one who was in it—"cloaks and sides were both torn." The management must have raised the prices for the occasion, for the intake of that first performance was 2,860 livres. A livre in 1795 was the equivalent of twenty cents. In Molière's time, more than a century earlier, it was nearer forty cents. The first house for "Le Tartuffe" probably represented about $1,000. For the time it was considered phenomenal; in our country it would be considered creditable now; ten years ago it would have been satisfactory.

What was all the excitement about? About a thoughtful, searching, well ordered, not very active but very epigrammatic comedy in verse about being on the square in your religion or out of it; a comedy of which the moral is—and Molière was always solicitous to present a moral—that being on the square *is* religion; a comedy which at the same time makes not being on the square sickening to the point of horror; a comedy of which the whole manly, honest, independent spirit is blown freshly to you across two and a half noisy, busy centuries on these lines from

the fifth scene of its first act—the words of clear-headed, clean-hearted Cléante, brother-in-law to Tartuffe's dupe:

"There are pretenders to devotion as to courage; and even as those who are truly brave when honor calls are not those who make the most noise, so the good and truly pious, in whose footsteps we ought to follow, are not those who make so many grimaces. What? will you make no distinction between hypocrisy and sincerity? Will you speak of them in the same words, and render the same homage to the mask as to the face, put artifice on a level with sincerity, confound the appearance with the reality, value the shadow as much as the substance and false coin as good? Men, truly, are strange beings! They are never seen in their own nature; reason's boundaries are too limited for them; in every character they overact the part; and often they mar what is most noble by gross exaggeration and wilful extremes. But this, brother, is by the way."

Again that spirit, vibrant and free, is released in the same scene:

" . . . The truly devout are easily recognized . . . their piety is human, is reasonable. They do not condemn all our actions. They think there is too much arrogance in these censures. Leaving haughty words to others, they reprove our actions by their own. They do not build upon the appearances of evil, and their minds are inclined to think well of others. No spirit of cabal is in them, and they have no intrigues to scent out; their sole care is to live rightly. They do not persecute a sinner; it is only the sin itself they hate. Nor do they desire to vindicate the interests of Heaven with a keener zeal than Heaven itself shows. These are the people I admire; that is the right way to live."

Preachment so mild and humane did not go unpunished in the France of 260 years ago—if the stage was the preacher's pulpit.

Four years pass. Molière is dead. Now the hour of the Tartuffes is come. They refuse him the last offices of religion. They try to bury him like a dog in unconsecrated ground. His wife screams from the housetop, quite literally from the housetop, "What! A sepulture is denied a man worthy of altars!"

But for him the altars shine now.

"Nothing is lacking to his glory," read the penitential words carved upon the bust of Molière that stands to-day in the French Academy—"nothing is lacking to his glory; he is lacking to ours."

For the Academicians, too, had rejected him while he lived—because he was an actor.

Even Louis himself, shrewd enough judge of men and matters until power and bigotry made him purblind—even Louis could not measure Molière at his full stature while Molière was close to him. "What great writer," the monarch one day asked Boileau, "has most honored my reign?"

"Molière, sire," instantly replied the greatest critic of the age.

"You surprise me," said the king, and added with the lovely urbanity which makes you forgive him almost everything except the revocation of the Edict of Nantes—"but, of course, you know best."

There are, in truth, no pleasanter phases of the life of Louis XIV to linger upon than the phases which link him with Molière, and more especially with "Tartuffe." "I should very much like to know," he once said to the Prince of Condé, with the suavity by which he was wont to draw men—"I should very much like to know why people who are so greatly scandalized at Molière's comedy [he was referring to "Tartuffe"] say nothing about 'Scaramouche.'"

(He had just seen in performance an impious piece of ribaldry called "Hermit Scaramouche.")

"The reason of that, sire," said the prince, "is that 'Scaramouche' makes fun of heaven and of religion, about which those gentlemen do not care, whereas Molière makes fun of *them,* and that they cannot stand." There is not in the literature of dramatic criticism a happier description of the office of the *vis comica* in the theater. For that is the force which drives preachment in upon a listening assemblage of fallible men and women who while they listen also see themselves in the clear mirror of the actor's art.

Nor has the *vis comica* of Molière ever ceased to function. That is no idle statement. The box office supports it. It is a practical, operant fact. In 1922, when they were celebrating with long drawn pomp and circumstance in France the three hundredth anniversary of Molière's birth, the figures on the number of performances of his plays given at the Comédie Française —the House of Molière, as men lovingly call it—were given out.

They covered the 240 years from 1680, seven years after Molière's death, to 1920. In that period his plays had received 21,472 performances at this one theater; "Tartuffe" led all the rest. It had been enacted 2,199 times.

The altar fire has never gone out.

## XXXIII

## LAMB'S "ESSAYS OF ELIA"

(First published in the *London Magazine* in 1820; first publication in book form in 1823. "Last Essays of Elia" published in 1833.)

*Shakespeare himself might have read them, and Hamlet have quoted them, for truly was our excellent friend of the genuine line of Yorick.*

LEIGH HUNT.

CHARLES LAMB was born in the first year of our War of Independence. The year 1923 brought the centenary of the appearance in book form of his "Essays of Elia."

But his style is as fragrant to us, his topics as appealing, and his approach as sociable as if he were one of us. In truth, he is. Not only did he never grow old; he never *has* grown old. The boon he asked for himself—for his physical body and his social soul—in the fifth of the first series of Elia papers, has been bestowed upon his books: they live on in pleasant, permanent companionships, as he wished to live. He was forty-five years old then, and a frank epicurean. To pause for an instant on his technique, I think we shall agree that if the passage we are about to read contained no other felicity of phrase than *"the sweet security of streets"* it still would be a distinguished passage:

"I am in love with this green earth; the face of town and country; the unspeakable rural solitudes, and the sweet security of streets. I would set up my tabernacle here. I am content to stand still at the age to which I am arrived; I, and my friends; to be no younger, no richer, no handsomer. I do not want to be weaned by age; or drop, like mellow fruit, as they say, into the grave.—Any alteration, on this earth of mine, in diet or in lodging, puzzles and discomposes me. My household-gods plant a terrible fixed foot, and are not rooted up without blood. They do not willingly seek Lavinian shores. A new state of being staggers me.

"Sun and sky, and breeze, and solitary walks, and summer holidays, and the greenness of fields, and the delicious juices of meats and fishes, and society, and the cheerful glass, and candlelight, and fireside conversations, and innocent vanities, and jest, and *irony itself*—do these things go out with life?"

"Do these things go out with life?" he muses plaintively, and then comes the touch of whimsicality without which no plaintiveness is Charles Lamb's kind of plaintiveness. "Do these things go out with life?":

"Can a ghost laugh, or shake his gaunt sides, when you are pleasant with him?"

Charles Lamb was so original a mind and so deft a stylist that he could make an essay on anything come laughing to him—and crying, also, for the lachrymæ rerum ever were close behind his smiles. He could, and did, make a ten-page essay on roast pig a classic. It is the twenty-fourth paper in the first Elia series, and contains the perfect pun, "'Presents,' I often say, 'endear Absents.'"

He made an essay on a game of whist a classic. He did the same with old china, with a Quaker meeting, with poor relations, with chimney-sweepers, and with a needy man who could convincingly play-act opulent hospitality. The commonplaces of every day, some would call them, but he made them the distinguished things of all the days.

There are twenty-eight papers, ranging from six to ten pages each, in the first Elia series. It began in the *London Magazine* in 1820; a decade later came the twenty-three papers called "The Last Essays of Elia," and grouped with them were sixteen little pieces, some only half a page long, on "Popular Fallacies," among them "That a Bully Is Always a Coward," "That Enough Is as Good as a Feast," "That Handsome Is That Handsome Does," and "That We Should Rise with the Lark."

The whole body of the Elian essays makes a comfortable volume of 450 pages. It would be less than twice the length of a current novel. But upon that bulk Lamb's fame securely rests, and it is as "Elia"—a liquid pseudonym (three vowels and Poet Gray's

favorite consonant) which he took from an Italian fellow clerk in the India House named Elia—it is as "Elia," that the world, speaking in the loverlike manner, makes music of his memory. Lamb wrote other essays more in the academic strain; he wrote poems and tales (collaborating with his sister Mary in the stories from Homer and from Shakespeare), and he left a mass of letters unsurpassed—one would say unequaled save that remembrance of Horace Walpole tugs—in our language for wit and vivacity.

But he wrote nothing so thoroughly Lamblike, so gracefully, daintily frisky as the fifty-one Elia papers which lure by their effect of complete spontaneity. Had that spontaneity, however, been actual the essays would have lapsed into twaddle. It was not actual. We know that he rewrote and rewrought the little articles until, as Professor Mair happily puts it, "he mimicked inconsequence so perfectly that his friends might have been deceived."

Merits far more general in their appeal than expert craftsmanship have kept men friends with Elia for a century. There is in his writing the warmth of a cheerful heart which had been ennobled by bitter trial. There is the essence of a tutored and sensitive mind. There is the tang of a sharp individuality. These are made known with the distinction of a fine style. Thus are the topics of every day made literature.

Lamb looked at life with the eyes of whimsical pity. His sympathies were as tender as they were gay. He had the delicacy of perception which converted the ludicrous not into the ridiculous but touched it with a soft and fleeting yearning that I like to think of as a smiling reverence. He knew the touchstones of kinship.

Take the essay—the tenth in the second Elian series—called "Captain Jackson." The essentials of that essay are a meager supper, a needy but flamboyant host, and desolating vocalism by the favorite daughter of a dull family. The most which most of us could bring to bear in the way of comment on such an experience would be the surly commonplace, "I was bored to tears!" Lamb was not bored to tears; he was moved to fond laughter and

sweet retrospect. Running over the obituaries in the newspaper one day he reads of the death of one whom, for the purposes of this paper, he elects to call Captain Jackson, "my dear old friend" of many a year before who rented a tenement which he was pleased to call a cottage and who was a retired half-pay officer. With subtle self-reproach Lamb lays down the paper:

"Alack, how good men, and the good turns they do us, slide out of memory, and are recalled but by the surprise of some such sad memento as that which now lies before us!"

Then he remembers for five pages the captain's feasts—the play-acted hospitality, the hollow, handsome Micawberisms of a mock bounty (the Captain might be own brother to Wilkins), the showy satisfaction that makes a relish for sparseness. But Lamb does not find these things contemptible. He finds them precious:

"Wine we had none; nor, except on very rare occasions, spirits; but the sensation of wine was there. Some thin kind of ale I remember,—'British beverage,' he would say! 'Push about, my boys'; 'Drink to your sweethearts, girls.' At every meager draft a toast must ensue, or a song. All the forms of good liquor were there, with none of the effects wanting. Shut your eyes, and you would swear a capacious bowl of punch was foaming in the center, with beams of generous Port or Madeira radiating to it from each of the table-corners. You got flustered, without knowing whence; tipsy upon words; and reeled under the potency of his unperforming Bacchanalian encouragements."

Then there is song. Louisa sings, and Lamb apostrophizes the "dear, cracked spinnet of dearer Louisa, thou thin accompanier of her thinner warble":

"A veil be spread over the dear delighted face of the well-deluded father, who now, haply listening to cherubic notes, scarce feels sincerer pleasure than when she awakened thy time-shaken chords responsive to the twitterings of that slender image of a voice."

The passage has softly brought you to one of Lamb's characteristic felicities of phrase—*"that slender image of a voice."*

In the essay on New Year's Eve comes again the twined felicity of the thought and the similitude. He is speaking of the peal which

rings out the old year, and in a seven word parenthesis he rings a little chime in harmony with those bells. "Bells," he says:

"*. . . bells, the music nighest bordering upon heaven.*"

Lamb, almost alone among the "word-catchers," as Emerson was wont to call the meticulous artificers in words, could have been content to let that pass in a seven word parenthesis. With most of them it would have been good for a paragraph—and then not so good. In the essay called "The Convalescent" you surely remember his sentence on convalescence:

"In this flat swamp of convalescence, left by the ebb of sickness, yet far enough from the terra firma of established health, your note, dear Editor, reached me."

One more: In a letter to Coleridge (1796) Lamb said the most felicitous thing about "The Complete Angler"—as to its spiritual function—that has been said about that truly Christian book:

". . . it breathes the very spirit of innocence, purity, and simplicity of heart: . . . it would Christianize every discordant angry passion. Pray make yourself acquainted with it."

If Lamb's words on Walton's "Angler" make one of the most pious of tributes, his instruction on how to read Milton is one of the stateliest of book notices as well as one of the most persuasive. Many a man has this passage led to con his "Paradise Lost" under the quiet arches of St. Giles Cripplegate—Milton's church—just before evensong:

"Much depends upon *when* and *where* you read a book. . . . Milton almost requires a solemn service of music to be played before you enter upon him. But he brings his music, to which, who listens, had need bring docile thoughts, and purged ears."

A special charm among Lamb's multitude of charms is that he whose spell has its source so largely in soft reverie, still is so richly concrete. Writing an essay on politeness which he calls "Modern Gallantry," he is not oracular on a subject that tempts to such treatment. He is ocular, as when he presents to you as "the only pattern of consistent gallantry I have met with," Joseph Paice of Bread-street Hill, merchant, and one of the directors of the South Sea company:

"Though bred a Presbyterian, and brought up a merchant, he was the finest gentleman of his time. He had not *one* system of attention to females in the drawing-room, and *another* in the shop, or at the stall. I do not mean that he made no distinction. But he never lost sight of sex, or overlooked it in the casualties of a disadvantageous situation. I have seen him stand bareheaded—smile, if you please—to a poor servant-girl, while she has been inquiring of him the way to some street—in such a posture of unforced civility, as neither to embarrass her in the acceptance, nor himself in the offer, of it.

"He was no dangler, in the common acceptation of the word, after women; but he reverenced and upheld, in every form in which it came before him, *womanhood*. I have seen him—nay, smile not—tenderly escorting a market-woman, whom he had encountered in a shower, exalting his umbrella over her poor basket of fruit, that it might receive no damage, with as much carefulness as if she had been a countess. To the reverend form of Female Eld he would yield the wall (though it were to an ancient beggar-woman) with more ceremony than we can afford to show our grandams. He was the Preux Chevalier of Age; the Sir Calidore, or Sir Tristan, to those who have no Calidores or Tristans to defend them. The roses, that had long faded thence, still bloomed for him in those withered and yellow cheeks."

As fellow men and fellow bookmen with Charles Lamb our little group of travelers along the shining highways of the best books would be disloyal to him and to ourselves did we close this present turning of the Elian pages without reading together a few lines from his "Detached Thoughts on Books and Reading." I spoke of Lamb as our fellow man and fellow bookman; I know not in which aspect of that dual camaraderie he is the dearer, but in this passage surely he is most dear as both: he is fellow bookman with the most fastidious and most learned; fellow man with the simplest and the least sophisticated:

"How beautiful to a genuine lover of reading are the sullied leaves, and worn-out appearance, nay, the very odor (beyond russia), if we would not forget kind feelings in fastidiousness, of an old 'Circulating Library' Tom Jones, or Vicar of Wakefield! How they speak of the thousand thumbs that have turned over their pages with delight!—of the lone sempstress, whom they may have cheered (milliner, or harder-working mantua-maker) after her long day's needle-toil, running far into midnight, when she has snatched an hour, ill spared from sleep, to steep her cares, as in some Lethean cup, in spelling out their enchanting contents! Who would have them a whit less soiled? What better condition could we desire to see them in?"

## XXXIV

## FIELDING'S "TOM JONES"

(First published in 1749)

*He looked on naked Nature unashamed,*
*And saw the Sphinx, now bestial, now divine,*
*In change and rechange; he nor praised nor blamed,*
*But drew her as he saw with fearless line.*
*Did he good service? God must judge, not we!*
*Manly he was, and, generous and sincere;*
*English in all, of genius blithely free:*
*Who loves a Man may see his image here.*

JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL.

(Epigraph to Margaret Thomas's bust of Fielding in the Shire Hall, Taunton, England.)

ABOUT a hundred and seventy-five years ago, reader, there were living in England sixteen men and women who—if you are sprung of English stock—were taking a remote, but, depending on the range of their imaginations, a solicitous interest in you.

Those sixteen persons were your great-great-grandfathers and your great-great-grandmothers; to them you were "posterity."

A century and three-quarters ago! To be precise, it figures out as the winter of 1749.

In February of that winter Andrew Millar, the publisher who usually was tipsy, but who solemnly drove his best bargains when he was so, issued to the trade a new novel entitled "The History of Tom Jones: A Foundling."

Instantly it became with those sixteen persons in whose taste and thoughts you have a right to take an intimate interest the best seller of the week; their preference meant something, for "Tom Jones" lived on, and has become a best seller of the ages.

There was much gossip among our great-great-grandparents about the author, a London justice of the peace named Henry

Fielding; much gossip about his improvidence, his wild parties, his strange friendships, which comprehended great men of title and Irish beggars; about his kindnes to litigants, whose differences he strove to compose even at the loss of rich fees to himself; about the death, less than five years before, of his first wife, who, he was now telling the world, was drawn at full length in the new best seller of the week, and about his marriage—seeming mad then, but turning out very well—to the first Mrs. Fielding's maid, with whom he had wept the passing of her mistress.

About all those matters, we may be sure, our sixteen relatives were talking—if they took any interest at all in the current best sellers.

What else were they talking about? What were they like? How did they talk at the dinner table in country houses; how in inn parlors and in inn kitchens; how in London drawing-rooms? What did they wear, eat, drink—and how much? How did they swear—and how hard? What did they think of capital punishment, and what of the last armed attempt—four years before—of the Stuarts to regain the English throne? If they lived in the country, how did they travel from the great shires to London; how were the roads, and what was the conversation in the stage coaches? Whom did they encounter on the way, and, having arrived, how safe were life and purse in the London streets at night? What were their favorite amusements, who the favorite actor of the most discerning, and what the morals, if any, of the woman of fashion who was solely a woman of fashion? Of what did a good young woman of position in the world talk to her maid, and what was that maid like?

Above all, did the sixteen whose blood runs in your veins, and whose virtues and faults make your character and temperament, know that they were the very body and soul of this best seller of February, 1749? Did they comprehend that this "Tom Jones" was to *make them better known to us than we are known ourselves?* If they did so comprehend, some of them must have felt qualms, for the picture of them "Tom Jones" gives us is no unmixed idyl.

To make them better known to us than we are known to our-

selves—something like that was Henry Fielding's prayer while he was writing "Tom Jones." That prayer comes in the first chapter of the thirteenth book of this thirteen hundred page novel. (For, so many pages does it make in volumes having type so clear and margins so generous as to be worthy of the book.) It is an invocation in the serio-comic vein, but more serious than comic, to his noble company of muses—"Genius, thou gift of Heaven," and "thou, Humanity, almost the constant attendant on true genius," and "thou, Learning, for without thy assistance nothing pure, nothing correct, can genius produce"—and lastly, he says:

> "Lastly, come Experience, long conversant with the wise, the good, the learned, and the polite. Nor with them only, but with every kind of character, from the minister at his levee, to the bailiff in his spunging-house; from the dutchess at her drum, to the landlady behind her bar."

And this, the essence of Fielding's invocation and the foundation of his philosophy of fiction's right to be written: "Teach me to know mankind better than they know themselves."

His prayer was answered, and his book found immortality.

Nobody has made more grateful or more eloquent record of that fact than Edward Gibbon did forty years later when he wrote his autobiography. The historian of Rome's decline and fall minded him as he wrote of a tradition, then generally accepted but by genealogists of our time proved false, that the family from which Fielding's English forbears sprang was identical with the continental family which gave to Europe the house of Hapsburg. In the opening pages of his autobiography Gibbon says:

> "Our immortal Fielding was of the younger branch of the Earls of Denbigh, who draw their origin from the Counts of Habsburg. . . . The successors of Charles V may disdain their brethren of England; but the romance of Tom Jones, that exquisite picture of human manners, will outlive the palace of the Escurial and the imperial eagle of the house of Austria."

The house of Austria is fallen, but new editions of "Tom Jones," cheap and dear, continue to come from the press, and if the world to-day less reads the book than reads about it, many

surely are buying and reading it, for publishers are philanthropists only indirectly.

What boots it us that the tale has lived? Why is it a treasure? It is a treasure not only because it is an extraordinarily spacious work of art but because it is one of the supreme works of instruction. It helps the man who would understand mankind. It helps him to understand the present because it makes so vivid, and so closely knits to us, that past out of which our present comes heavy-laden with the errors, successes, follies and virtues of the past. It is a robust work of morals. But had it been only that, it would not have survived "the imperial eagle of the house of Austria." Life stays in it because it rouses us, who are more intent upon the routine of existence than upon its surprises and its delightfulness, to the gusto of living. Rough and turbulent its movement often is, but—smug critics who love not gusto, to the contrary—its essential note is the note of immense geniality, the note of a tenderness as comprehensive as it is true.

James Russell Lowell beautifully said the same thing about Fielding forty years ago in his address dedicating the bust of the novelist which may be seen to-day in the shire hall at Taunton, county-town of Somerset, Fielding's native shire and scene of many of the episodes of "Tom Jones":

> "It is the privilege of genius that to it life never grows commonplace as to the rest of us, and that it sees Falstaffs or Don Quixotes or Squire Westerns where we have never seen anything more than the ordinary Toms and Dicks and Harrys."

Fielding, taking such an episode as a good old widower's discovery of a foundling child in his bed, could make it naught less than a chapter in the annals of saintship. With such an episode he launches his hero upon his career; with it he introduces to you the most amiable and worthy patriarch in English fiction, and with it he gives you a foretaste of the sweet, whimsical veracity which infuses his best work with its best and its deathless charm. This is the episode of the night of Squire Allworthy's return from London to his estate in Somerset:

> "He came to his house very late in the evening, and after a short supper with his sister, retired much fatigued to his chamber. Here,

having spent some minutes on his knees—a custom which he never broke through on any account—he was preparing a step into bed, when, upon opening the cloathes, to his great surprize, he beheld an infant, wrapped up in some coarse linen, in a sweet and profound sleep, between his sheets. He stood some time lost in astonishment at this sight; but, as good nature had always the ascendant in his mind, he soon began to be touched with sentiments of compassion for the little wretch before him. He then rang his bell, and ordered an elderly woman-servant to rise immediately, and come to him; and in the meantime was so eager in contemplating the beauty of innocence, appearing in those lively colors with which infancy and sleep always display it, that his thoughts were too much engaged to reflect that he was in his shirt when the matron came in."

Speaks, then, that matron, pitilessly ready in innuendo, eloquent in self-righteousness:

"I hope your worship will send out your warrant to take up the hussy its mother. . . . I should be glad to see her committed to bridewell, and whipt at the cart's tail. Indeed, such wicked sluts cannot be too severely punished. . . . I don't know what is worse than for such wicked strumpets to lay their sins at honest men's doors; and though your worship knows your own innocence, yet the world is censorious, and it hath been many an honest man's hap to pass for the father of children he never begot. . . . For my own part, it goes against me to touch these misbegotten wretches."

And then:

"There were some strokes in this speech which perhaps would have offended Mr. Allworthy, had he strictly attended to it; but he had now got one of his fingers into the infant's hand, which, by its gentle pressure, seeming to implore his assistance, had certainly outpleaded the eloquence of Mrs. Deborah, had it been ten times greater than it was."

And so, into a world that rails and is malevolent, and into a world that bends tenderly over innocence and helplessness—a world that can be so cruel and so kind—is Tom Jones ushered.

What befell him?

That is a matter of twenty vivid years and more, and of some forty of Tom's fellow mortals drawn at full length by him whom Lord Byron called "the prose Homer of human nature."

It is the epic matter of those sixteen long gone forbears of

yours whom in this book you shall come to know better than you know yourself.

It is more than a gallery. It is a pageant, for Fielding's figures hang not flat and lifeless upon a wall, but stride storming and swearing along, like Squire Western, Falstaff's heir; or move with stately step, sedate, kind and forbearing, like Allworthy, whose "smiles at folly were indeed such as we may suppose the angels bestow on the absurdities of mankind"; or swagger like Tom, ever swaggering into trouble and somehow swaggering out because at bottom the lusty heart of him is good and sound; or sneak plausibly by like the younger Blifil, who was wont to use "one of those grinning sneers with which the devil marks his best beloved"; or flutter prettily like Sophia Western, whom Fielding drew from the charming Charlotte Cradock of Salisbury whom he courted four years and finally married, and the drawing of whose portrait so solaced his heart after her death that he drew it again in the Amelia Booth of his last novel.

Or they bustle brutally about like Parson Thwackum, Tom's mentor, who "was for doing justice and leaving mercy to heaven"; or they utter shrewd dramatic criticism like the barber-schoolmaster Partridge—Tom's Sancho Panza—who, when they took him to see Mr. Garrick as Hamlet, said:

> "Why I could act as well as he myself. I am sure, if I had seen a ghost, I should have looked in the very same manner and done just as he did. And then, to be sure, in that scene, as you called it, between him and his mother, where you told me he acted so fine, why, Lord help me, any man, that is, any good man, that had such a mother, would have done exactly the same. I know you are only joking with me; but indeed, madam, though I was never at a play in London, yet I have seen acting before in the country; and the king for my money; he speaks all his words distinctly, half as loud again as the other.—Anybody may see he is an actor."

Out of the shadows of their far time they move to us. Into the sunlight of our relishing favor and recognition they move, and they all are alive again.

On the title page of her copy of "Tom Jones" Fielding's second

cousin, Lady Wortley Montagu, the cleverest woman of her time, wrote "Ne plus ultra," and when her cousin died she wrote to her daughter, the Countess of Bute, "I am persuaded he has known more happy moments than any prince upon earth."

Aye, and given more!

## XXXV

## THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER

(Translated and adapted partly from Roman-Catholic sources between the years 1542 and 1549. First edition 1549)

*Already, on the bench, under it, and on all sides of it, lay a score of struggling agonized human beings, beating the ground, tearing their very flesh in the exaltation of fear and frenzy, choking, gasping; and through it all, shrieking mad and awful appeals to the Most High; while the crowd around them, all on their feet, shouted and yelled in incoherent delirium.*

*"Come! Come!" the voice on the platform rose above the din. "Be saved while there is yet time."*

*"ALMIGHTY GOD——"*

*My heart stood still. The Bishop [a bishop of the Protestant Episcopal church present at this negro camp meeting as an onlooker] had risen to his feet, and his gigantic figure towered up as he spread out his hands above the crowd; and, as his deep tones rang out clear and dominant in that hideous Babel, a sudden silence fell upon them all.*

*"—The Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who desireth not the death of a sinner, but rather that he may turn from his wickedness and live, hath given power, and commandment, to his Ministers, to declare and pronounce to his people, being penitent, the Absolution and Remission of their sins. He pardoneth and absolveth all those who truly repent, and unfeignedly believe his holy gospel."*

*The madness had gone—utterly gone—out of that stricken throng. The struggling figures around the bench ceased to struggle. They raised their heads as they lay upon the ground, and every face in the clearing was turned toward the Bishop, wearing a look of eager wonderment which I shall never forget. The Bishop, his eyes still far away, his hands stretched out over the people, went on:*

*—"Wherefore let us beseech him to grant us true repentance, and his Holy Spirit, that those things may please him which we do at this present; and that the rest of our life hereafter may be pure and holy; so that at the last we may come to his eternal joy; through Jesus Christ our Lord."*

*And the people answered, "Amen."*

*Then, in a voice that was almost feeble, so tender had it grown, he turned toward the East, and, in that abiding silence, he pronounced the Benediction.*

*For a moment, until they began to disperse softly and silently, the Bishop stood erect, then he sank back into his seat, with one arm around my neck and one around Jack's.*—From Henry Cuyler Bunner's story, "As One Having Authority."

More than a quarter of a century has passed since Bunner's exquisite short story, "As One Having Authority"—perhaps as nearly perfect a short story as ever came from an American pen—appeared in *Scribner's Magazine*. None who read it then can have forgotten it, for it developed briefly, but with tender eloquence, a theme fresh in native fiction—the victory of consecrated dignity over mass hysteria. Bunner died too soon. In 1896, having done fine things, he seemed at the beginning of great things. Then, at forty, he finished his course.

Happily, "As One Having Authority" is saved to posterity in the collected edition of Bunner's works which the Scribners published in 1896, and its message of sweetness and sense may there be read. A volume of commentary on the spirit of the Book of Common Prayer could be written—and be assured many a careful, pious, dreary one has been written—without defining that spirit as tellingly as does the beautiful little story of the Protestant Episcopal bishop who stilled the sickening frenzy of a southern camp meeting by his timely utterance of that treasure of the Book, "the Declaration of Absolution, or Remission of Sins"—"to be made," the rubric says, "by the Priest alone, standing; the People still kneeling."

Let us not pull long faces nor assume pieties, but talk of this book with the candor we try to employ when we talk of other masterpieces of literature. We shall not be the less reverent for discarding the routine pieties. They are all sacred—these masterpieces—with a higher, truer, more enduring consecration than ecclesiasticism can confer upon them, and if we talk decorously of the masterpiece catalogued as secular we shall not fail of the right attitude toward those which great numbers of our fellow readers think of as sacred.

The spirit of the Book of Common Prayer that rewards attention when we consider it as literature is its celestial good taste. The men who put together this gracious and graceful ritual had

strong stomachs for the infliction of physical pain upon those who did not agree with them, but when they came to devising a ritual that should be at once dignified and heart searching they knew their work. They understood man's weakness for reducing himself to the level of a howling dervish in his religious excitements and his penitent moods. They understood another tendency of devotees—the tendency, as they wax rich, to overload worship with luxurious language and emblem. They determined to curb on the one hand the hysteria and on the other the excessive pomp into which religious emotion was inclined to run.

They feared the pious hedonist. "Decently and in order" was their motto, and if you could not or would not temper pious raptures with decorum then you would be fined or imprisoned or exiled or burned for the present and damned for the future. Their sanitation, social and personal, was barbarous, but their faith in liturgical decorum was unshakable. They were pitiless but proper.

They did their work well. For generations upon generations they extinguished among the most powerful and best educated body of Anglo-Saxon religionists the voice of the illiterate, insolent, overweening, pulpit thumping exhorter. He had to go elsewhere with his raucous vulgarities that made a mock of praise and prayer, and among people who preferred to worship "decently and in order" the solemn voice of the spirit could gain a hearing—occasionally.

They did that by means of this book.

It is unlike most classics in this: The people know more that is in it and less about it than they do of any other book. Its history is, however, memorable, interesting, and richly ironic.

It has been a best seller—except for the five years of Mary Tudor and a part of the Commonwealth—for nearly 380 years.

It obtained a running start toward best sellership. The Englishman, woman, and child of the year 1549, when it came on the market, had to use it or the realm grew too hot to hold them. That was in the reign of gentle Edward VI. His half-sister, Elizabeth, when she came to the throne, showed herself a helpful patron of the religious branch of the publishing business by the edicts she

signed. A clergyman who did not use the Book of Common Prayer, or who spoke against it, was fined for the first offense a year's value of his living and was liable to a year's imprisonment; second offense, living forfeited; third offense, imprisonment for life. There were 9,400 clergymen in England then. Only one hundred and eighty-nine refused to use the new best seller and gave up their livings.

If you were a layman and talked against the book you could be heavily punished, and if you did not go to church on Sunday to hear it read you could be fined a "shilling"—and a shilling was then worth nearly twenty times as much as it is now.

It sprang—this gracious book, certainly the most humane and liberal ritual that has come to us from antiquity—out of terrible times, out of the gropings of murderous rulers, bickering prelates, and a distracted people. The old church was being stripped of lands and revenues by greedy nobles and politicians, neither the new ecclesiastical organization nor the state obtaining much of the plunder.

The book was formulated under the keen eye and ax of the most gifted and most revolting monarch in the annals of English kingship, and it came, in considerable part, from the pen of a prelate—Thomas Cranmer—who was considered notably humane in his time, but who assented to the burning of Joan Bocher and others because their religious views differed from his.

It was an age of blood and boodle—but it could write. Tennyson said to his son and biographer, Hallam Tennyson, that he thought the Bible, the Psalms, and the Book of Common Prayer were written at "the grandest period" of our language, and Froude told the poet that some of the Acts of Elizabeth were written in "the grandest language" he knew. Tennyson's "grandest period" would include about two generations—from 1549 and the first edition of the Book of Common Prayer to 1611 and the King James version of the Bible.

When men who could write as Alfred Tennyson and James Anthony Froude wrote pronounce for English of a certain period that English deserves the earnest study of all who are learning how to write. Therefore let us test the English they commended.

Of all the glories of the Book of Common Prayer, I think the stateliest and the loveliest in thought and diction is "A Prayer for All Conditions of Men," which comes toward the end of "The Order for Daily Morning Prayer." Thus it moves:

"O God, the Creator and Preserver of all mankind, we humbly beseech thee for all sorts and conditions of men; that thou wouldest be pleased to make thy ways known unto them, thy saving health unto all nations. More especially we pray for thy holy Church universal; that it may be so guided and governed by thy good Spirit, that all who profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life. Finally, we commend to thy fatherly goodness all those who are any ways afflicted or distressed, in mind, body, or estate; that it may please thee to comfort and relieve them, according to their several necessities; giving them patience under their sufferings, and a happy issue out of all their afflictions. And this we beg for Jesus Christ's sake. Amen."

This is the perfect utterance of reverence, humility, solicitude, charity, and tenderness. There are 153 words. What word could be taken away without hurt to the thought or the cadence? There are phrases that seem chiseled in marble, so pure and strong and clear are they—"thy saving health unto all nations"—"in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life"—"thy fatherly goodness"—"patience under their sufferings, and a happy issue out of all their afflictions"—and yet every phrase is warm with life and instinct with humanity and with yearning.

They "chime like church bells in the ears of the English child," said Froude of these prayers. But you must have the whole passage from his "Reign of Edward the Sixth." It comes in Chapter V—a little more than halfway through it:

"As the translation of the Bible bears upon it the imprint of the mind of Tyndall, so, while the Church of England remains, the image of Cranmer will be seen reflected on the calm surface of the Liturgy. The most beautiful portions of it are translations from the Breviary; yet the same prayers translated by others would not be those which chime like church bells in the ears of the English child. The translations, and the addresses which are original, have the same silvery melody of language, and breathe the same simplicity of spirit. . . . Services which have outlived so many storms speak for their own excellence, and speak for the merit of the workman."

The workman is one of the strangest and most baffling figures in history.

Cranmer, the ornament and counselor of two Tudor reigns and burned as traitor and heretic in a third, was born three years before Columbus discovered America. Before he entered the church he was, probably, a married man.

He became a priest before the English Reformation and his advancement under Henry VIII was rapid, for he hit upon the "deceased brother's wife" piece of inhumanity and chicanery which freed Henry from Katherine of Aragon. When the king learned that the device was the product of Cranmer's mind, that robust murderer remarked, "This man, I trow, has got the right sow by the ear." Cranmer was statesman and prelate, and a passionate lover of life. He was horseman, hunter, and hawker and—in the sense that the pulpit was the press of his day because it was the chief organ of public opinion—he was publicist. He was also a pliant courtier, and that was his destruction. He seems to have been one of the weakest and one of the strongest of men. He was, according to the standards of a notably black and brutal time, notably humane—the book to which he gave many a lovely touch of Christian charity would indicate that—and his secretary, Ralph Morice, described him as "a man that delighted not in revenging."

Extenuating his acquiescence in certain of Henry's infamies, Morice said that "men ought to consider with whom he had to do, a prince as would not be bridled nor against said [gainsaid] in any of his wishes." True beyond question, but the result of Cranmer's numerous tergiversations and of his one downright treachery (the attempt to abort the will of Henry) was his death by fire at Oxford.

Infirmity of purpose seems to have been the curse of his nature, but by his steadfastness in his last hours he atoned in a manner so picturesque that the world has taken him to its heart and calls him martyr.

The story, however, that he held in the flame until it was consumed the hand which had signed the most pitiable of his

recantations has neither historical authority nor physical possibility to sustain it.

As the man of light and leading—and the stylist—in the committee of convocation appointed to prepare a service book for the reformed church, Cranmer began the work in 1542. He was then fifty-three years old. His task continued through six years and the result was "the first service book of Edward VI," so-called. It was first published in 1549 by Richard Grafton, a grocer, who became printer and zealot. There were substantial revisions in 1552 and in 1559. At the latter date Cranmer was dead, but his stylistic impress remained. Nor has the passing of three centuries and three-quarters blurred or outdated it. He had copious sources in the Latin missal, breviary, and pontifical of the Roman and Gallican churches for the book he put together, but the organ roll of English undefiled into which he transmuted his selections was the music of his own mind.

The manner in which he faced a dreadful death, and what Donald Grant Mitchell called "that noble English rhythmic flow" of the Book of Common Prayer, have won him immortality in the annals of heroism and of letters.

Mr. Trevelyan calls him "the gentle and perplexed founder of Anglicanism," and Tennyson, in the third scene of the fourth act of his "Queen Mary," utters this lofty tribute to him:

> "He pass'd out smiling, and he walk'd upright;
> His eye was like a soldier's, whom the general
> He looks to and he leans on as his God,
> Hath rated for some backwardness and bidd'n him
> Charge one against a thousand, and the man
> Hurls his soil'd life against the pikes and dies."

## XXXVI

## CERVANTES' "DON QUIXOTE"

### (Part I published in 1604 or 1605; Part II in 1615)

*Was there ever yet anything written by mere man that was wished longer by its readers, excepting "Don Quixote," "Robinson Crusoe," and "The Pilgrim's Progress"?*

SAMUEL JOHNSON.

(Mrs. Piozzi's "Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson," 1786.)

"COME," said George Gissing in that book which is his own soul, "The Private Papers of Henry Ryecroft"—"Come, once more before I die I will read 'Don Quixote.'" The words are in the pensive passage wherein Henry goes the rounds of his library, pondering upon the choice of books he shall make for what is like to be his farewell to the friends of a lifetime.

Lordly commentaries—lordly and long—have been written on "Don Quixote" without half so happily expressing the lifelong tug inherent in this book; this book so alive that it charms the hours of youth and renews the youth of the old. For those in between—ah, what a friendly guide along the way! Book so merry and so searching, so plaintive, too, and in the essence of it so reconciled and loving that it has become a world-book.

We talk of the dim past. But can the past grow dim to our eyes so long as we hold in our hands a book that thus touches the past to light and laughter:

"And now the jolly morn with smiling looks came on apace, and the flowers of the fields disclosed their folds and raised their heads. The liquid crystals of the brooks, in gentle murmurs, played with the gray pebbles and flowed along to pay their tribute to the expecting rivers. The earth was merry, the sky was clear, the air sweet, the daylight serene, and everything, singly and jointly, gave evident token that the day which came treading on Aurora's skirts must be serene and bright."

That is the close of Chapter XXXV (Part II) in the narrative of the high adventures of the Don and Sancho at the ducal court. Can the dust ever gather on a book like that? It fills house and heart with sunshine, and in the warmth of it the mists of three centuries dissolve, the flowers lift their heads, the brooks go singing to the rivers with their song that never grows old, men find it good to be alive, and the glory of morning streams over all the world.

"Don Quixote" is not a book to "sit down to"—as men phrase it, and so phrasing convert bright prospect into threat of doleful task—but a book to set out upon. Let reading of it be as a pleasure-journey—interrupted, indeterminate, delayed, full of loiterings and surprises. Delight in it, as in the journey, is a leisurely matter. It is not to be hurdled through; it is a wandering through the land—cities and inns, the wayside and the square; duels, fantasies, woeful obsessions, and antics to make men weep; then forlorn homecomings, a clearing of the vision, and a lying down for the long sleep.

They that stand listening by the bed hear a weary murmur:

*"'Soft and fair, gentlemen; never look for birds of this year in the nests of the last; I was mad, and now I am in my senses.'*

*" . . . and the scrivener, who was by, said he had never read in any book of chivalry of any knight-errant who had ever died in his bed so quietly and like a good Christian as Don Quixote."*

Is it outdated—this stocky volume of over a thousand pages that has been a best seller for more than three centuries? The centuries march dimly by, but always there comes again "a jolly morn with smiling looks," and you open the book, and you know that such things as these are never outdated:

"Show me thy company, I will tell thee what thou art."

"Every man is as Heaven made him, and sometimes a great deal worse."

"Make it thy business to know thyself, which is the most difficult lesson in the world."

"The brave man carves out his fortune, and every man is the son of his own works."

"Sancho, Sancho, there is a time for all things; unseasonable mirth always turns to sorrow."

"All men cannot be friars; and many are the roads by which God brings his own to Heaven."

"Had you better not stay at home, and live in peace and quietness, than go rambling up and down like a vagabond, and seeking for better bread than is made of wheat, without once so much as considering that many go to seek wool, and come home shorn themselves."

Listen again. Here is a handful more in the music of the language that was their mother three centuries ago—albeit now almost all the languages of Christendom are foster-mothers to them:

"Bien predica quien bien vive." (He preaches well who lives well.)

"Haceos miel, y paparos han moscas." (Make yourself honey and the flies will devour you.)

"Paciencia y barajar." (Patience, and shuffle the cards.)

"Quien canta, sus males espanta." (He who sings frightens away his ills.)

"Siempre favorece el cielo los buenos deseos." (Heaven always favors good wishes.)

"Todo saldrá en la colada." (It will all come out in the wash.)

"Tripas llevan piés." (The stomach carries the feet.)

It is the distilled wisdom of shepherd and scholar, soldier and parish-priest, barber and great man of affairs, carter and merchant, knight and groom, country girl and woman of fashion, which has given "Don Quixote" its immortality and freighted it with universal timeliness. Lowell, in an essay that is among the best he wrote because the freest from his straining facetiousness, called the Don and Sancho "the contemporaries of every generation." That is one of those statements the value and interest of which lie in the corroboration of them.

Of the enduring contemporaneousness from age to age of the Don and Sancho, corroboration is abundant. There is, for example, the old story of Philip III of Spain who saw one day, when "Don Quixote" was a new book, a solitary student sitting

on a bank of the Manzanares, book in hand and loud laughter on his lips. "That man," said the monarch, "is either mad or he is reading 'Don Quixote.'" (Old Ballou of the Boston public library used to say that the king's remark was "a volume of panegyric in a few words.")

Twenty-six decades pass.

One day in London, in 1872, Charles Eliot Norton of Harvard has Ruskin and Carlyle as his guests at luncheon. The talk touches many topics; "Don Quixote" is one of them, and Carlyle says, "A book that I hold among the very best ever written—the one book that Spain has produced." "Yes," says Ruskin, "as you think of but one author in Spain, so for me there is but one painter." Interesting. But what makes Norton's little party veritable and precious is that after luncheon they had a Punch and Judy show in front of Professor Norton's window because Ruskin loved it, and Carlyle sat by the fire and smoked his pipe.

Come now to the generation more than thirty decades distant from the laughing student by the banks of the Manzanares—our generation. I read in a newspaper not long ago that "Relativity" Einstein cheerfully admits an ignorance of the masterpieces of belles lettres that would make a high school girl blush, but that any mention of Cervantes' "Don Quixote" and Dostoevsky's "The Brothers Karamazov" stirs him to eager and enthusiastic response. And the great Osler, in one of his books, said that no man is adequately equipped as a judge of human nature who does not know "Don Quixote."

When you look about you, not alone into books but into the more casual references of newspapers and reviews, you find that Cervantes is woven into the fiber of modern man's thinking. That is partly because he is pithy; partly because he is searching. Many a fantasy he brushes away with a line; many an aspiration he defines in a paragraph. On the motto page of the first volume of his new "History of Minnesota" Professor Folwell makes known his ideal of his obligation as historian by printing a version of the celebrated passage in Chapter IX (Part I) of "Don Quixote" which runs:

" . . . for historians ought to be precise, faithful, and unprejudiced, and neither interest nor fear, hatred nor affection, should make them swerve from the way of truth, whose mother is history, the rival of time, the depositary of great actions, the witness of the past, example to the present, and monitor to the future."

There are capital bits about books in that Chapter VI (Part I) where the curate and the barber are turning over the absent Don's collection, in which the wise and the foolish were jumbled:

" 'Here's a bigger,' cried the barber, 'called "The Treasure of Divers Poems." ' 'Had there been fewer of them,' said the curate, 'they would have been more esteemed.' "

And this sapiency from the barber when he comes upon Maldonardo's book of songs:

" 'He seems indeed to be somewhat too long in his eclogues; but can we ever have too much of a good thing?' "

Many a badgered reviewer could cast a grateful flower on the grave of Cervantes—if any man knew where it is—when he comes on this bit of his pith concerning the multitude of books that have no excuse:

"There are men that will make you books and turn them loose into the world with as much dispatch as they would do a dish of fritters."

Some things that we think of as peculiarly of our time—whims of fashion and little ingenious devices—we come upon in "Don Quixote," as this, when the Don and Sancho encounter the two friars faring toward Seville:

" . . . they spied coming toward them two friars of the order of St. Benedict, mounted on two mules. . . . They wore riding masks, *with glasses at the eyes, against the dust.*"

Americans can remember the time when the fastidious among the fair did not mention legs as such. In Cervantes' time the current affectation of the finicky was not to utter the word "hog." One ate hogs, but did not speak them. It made Cervantes smile, and his smile banished that affectation:

"It happened also at the very moment that a swineherd getting together his hogs (for, without begging pardon, so they are called). . . ."

And, sure proof of the everlasting timeliness and truth of Cervantes' book, forty years ago when Mark Twain was writing "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" he produced a book which, without being an imitation, is in passage upon passage not alone a reëxpression of the spirit but a recasting of the phrasing of the book which made the student laugh three centuries ago and which now makes Einstein look up responsively.

Everybody thinks he can teach the teacher. So if I were a teacher, I would forbear to tell a boy that he "ought to read 'Don Quixote.'" But, casually, I would ask him to glance into, as a matter of curiosity—and maybe of some entertainment—Chapter XIX (Part II) wherein the Don and Sancho meet with the two students of Salamanca and hear the mournful tale of the lovelorn Basil. That chapter runs to barely six pages—say 2,400 words. Less than three columns of a newspaper would hold it all.

I would ask the boy to consider whether it is not extraordinary in arrangement and massing and compacting of material—how here there is the Don's little homily on marriage, which proves that he was not always mad, and here a rush of Sancho's misuse of proverbs which makes him own brother to Shakespeare's Touchstone—whose popularity dates from about the same time as Sancho's does—and here a description of a fencing bout that is as snappy, if you want the word, as anything in "The Three Musketeers," and here a tiny essay on good style that excels for pithiness anything in any rhetoric that a teacher ever made a boy bend over. Thus:

The Homily on Marriage:

"Whoever undertakes a long journey, if he be wise, makes it his business to find out an agreeable companion. How cautious then should he be, who is to take a journey for life, whose fellow-traveler must not part with him but at the grave; his companion at bed and board, and everywhere; as the wife must be to the husband! She is no such sort of ware that a man can be rid of when he pleases; no

exchange, no sale, no alienation can be made; she is an inseparable accident to man, which shall last as long as life: marriage is a noose, which, fastened about the neck, becomes a Gordian knot which nothing but the scythe of death can cut."

And here Sancho's fluent pity and proverbs when the students tells him that Basil is like to die of Quiteria's scorn:

"'Heaven forbid!' cried Sancho. 'God that gives the wound may give the remedy. This is one day, but to-morrow is another, and a house may fall down in a minute. After a storm comes calm. Many a man that went to bed well, has found himself dead in the morning. Who can put a spoke in Fortune's wheel? Nobody here, I am sure. Between a woman's yea and nay, I would not engage to put a pin's-point. . . . For this same love, they say, looks through spectacles that makes copper like gold, poverty like riches, and eyesores like pearls.'

"'Whither, in the name of ill-luck, art thou running now, Sancho?' said Don Quixote. 'When thou fallest to threading thy proverbs and old wives' sayings, no one but Judas himself (who I wish had thee) can stop thee. What dost thou know, poor animal, of spokes or wheels, or anything else?'

"'Why, truly, sir,' quoth Sancho, 'if you do not understand me, no wonder if my sentences be thought nonsense. But let that pass. I understand myself; and I am sure I have not talked so much like a ninny. But you, forsooth, are so sharp a cricket.'

"'A critic, blockhead,' said Don Quixote, 'thou confounded corruptor of human speech!'"

In the midst of the excitement, comes the bit on good diction that has the makings of an essay in it, for Sancho continues:

"'By yea and by nay,' quoth Sancho, 'be not so sharp with me, sir. I was never brought up at court or university to know when I add or take away a letter. Some are born in one town, some in another; one at Sayago, another at Toledo; and even there all are not so nicely spoken.'

"'You are in the right, friend,' said the student: 'Those natives of that city, who live among the tanners, or about the market of Zocodover, and are confined to mean conversation, cannot speak so well as those that spend almost the whole day in the precincts of the cathedral, and yet they are all of Toledo. But propriety, purity, and elegance of style may be found among men of breeding and judgment, let them be born where they will; for judgment is the grammar of good language, though practice and example will go a great way.'"

Then the fencing bout when the two students fall out in their argument over style:

"Then Corchuelo flew at him like a fury, helterskelter, cut and thrust, backstroke and forestroke, single and double, and laid on like any lion. But the student stopped him in the middle of his career with a dab in the teeth, that made him kiss the button of his foil, as if it had been a relic, though not altogether with so much devotion. In short, he told all the buttons of his short cassock with pure clean thrusts, and made the skirts of it hang about him in rags like fish-tails. Twice he struck off his hat, and, in fine, so mauled and tired him, that through perfect vexation Corchuelo took the foil by the hilt, and hurled it from him with such violence, that one of the countrymen that were by, happening to be a notary-public, has it upon record to this day, that he threw it almost three-quarters of a league; which testimony has served, and yet serves to let posterity know that strength is overcome by art."

And then I would ask the boy, if I were a teacher, to make for himself—if he specially liked any of them—a little collection of the sententious utterances embedded in that chapter which have become common coinage in human speech. He might—who knows?—select "God that gives the wound may give the remedy," or "Judgment is the grammar of good language," or "Strength is overcome by art," or some of the part about "how cautious should he be who is to take a journey for life."

Or he might only laugh and say, "I would rather read again where Sancho calls the Don a cricket!"

And if he did I still should be content.

For the time will come when the boy will move on from the frolic of Cervantes to the essential spirit of Cervantes, the spirit which makes his "Ingenious Gentleman, Don Quixote of La Mancha," the delight and comfort of those who are no longer boys, the spirit which makes it, in the words of Anatole France, "a manual of tolerance and indulgent pity, a holy bible of benignity."

The knight and his squire touch life and live life from remotely separated points of view. Sancho is comfort; the Don is aspiration:

"'. . . only this I understand,' quoth Sancho, 'that while I am asleep I feel neither fear, nor hope, nor pain, nor glory. Blessings light on

him that first invented this same sleep! a cloak that covers all man's thoughts; it is meat for the hungry, drink for the thirsty, heat for the cold, and cold for the hot, and in fine the current coin that purchases all things, the balance and weight that sets the king and the shepherd, the fool and the wise man, even.' "

Sancho's soul dwells in the valley of content; the Don, for the discipline and enlargement of his soul, will not avert his eyes from the heights nor spare himself the weary struggle thither:

" 'So, my Sancho, since we expect a Christian reward, we must suit our actions to the rules of Christianity. In giants we must kill pride and arrogance: but our greatest foes, and whom we must chiefly combat, are within. Envy we must overcome by generosity and nobleness of soul; anger, by a reposed and easy mind; riot and drowsiness, by temperance and vigilance; lasciviousness, by our inviolable fidelity to those who are mistresses of our thoughts; and sloth, by our indefatigable peregrinations through the universe, to seek occasions of military, as well as Christian honors. This, Sancho, is the road to lasting fame, and a good and honorable renown.' "

## XXXVII

### HOMER'S "ODYSSEY"

(Probably composed in the Ninth Century B.C.)

*. . . men turn, and see the stars, and feel the free*
*Shrill wind beyond the close of heavy flowers,*
*And through the music of the languid hours*
*They hear like ocean on a western beach*
*The surge and thunder of the Odyssey.*

ANDREW LANG.

*When 'Omer smote 'is bloomin' lyre,*
*He'd 'eard men sing by land an' sea;*
*An' what 'e thought 'e might require,*
*'E went an' took—the same as me!*

RUDYARD KIPLING.

HOMER is great morning reading. He tonics the day.

To start the routine of the day with a page of Homer is like waking to the roar of the sea or the song of the wind in a forest, for the old man transmutes routine into golden experience. Nothing in a life that is really lived is to him negligible, nothing contemptible. Each day is a pageant of wonders and joys, each night of sleep the prize for having lived well or the sweet respite from something suffered.

Men call him the poet of antiquity. It is not so. He is the poet of this morning, and if a few hours hence you will look westward along the darkening vista of a crowded city street you will find that he is the poet of this evening, too.

His heroes are always on tiptoe to meet existence. Prince Bismarck often said that if there were no hereafter it would not be worth while our bothering to arise and dress and lace our shoes in the morning. Homer's men thought a good deal about the hereafter, but that preoccupation did not blur the morning of each

recurring day for them, nor the evening thereof. Each morning, each evening was a poem, every detail familiar but possessing an ever new fragrance, and joyously livable. This is no fancy. Open to the first lines of Book II of the "Odyssey." Young Telemachus is getting up in the morning:

"Now so soon as early Dawn, the rosy-fingered, shone forth, the dear son of Odysseus rose from his bed and put on his raiment and cast his keen sword about his shoulder, and beneath his smooth feet he bound his goodly sandals, and stept forth from his chamber, in bearing like a god. And straightway he bade the clear voiced heralds to call the long haired Achæans to the assembly." *

Thus is the day's business begun—on the shout of the clear voiced ones, and the world of three thousand years ago is in motion again as ours is when the whistles blow and the car bells clang—and life is good now, as then it was. And one loves that tiny detail about the dogs which comes to us, fresh and engaging, across the thirty centuries:

" . . . he went on his way to the assembly holding in his hand a spear of bronze—not alone he went, for two swift hounds bore him company."

Homer knew the line about the dogs was important, just as the special correspondents and the press associations to-day know it is important—and so telegraph the news to the nation—that in the afternoon the President walked with his collies in the White House grounds.

Homer never grows old. Early one Monday morning Thoreau pushed his boat away from a bank of the Merrimack River where he had slept the night before and he told about it in half a dozen lines of English prose which imitate Homer and more exactly

* Passages from the "Odyssey" quoted in this sketch are taken from Butcher and Lang's easily obtainable prose translation of the poem; newcomers to Homer will find none more satisfying. As to the versified translations—Chapman's, Cowper's, Bryant's—all have their excellencies. But avoid Pope's jingling one. When his version of the "Iliad" came out Pope spoke to the critic, Bentley, of "my Homer." "It is a pretty poem, Mr. Pope," replied the blunt Yorkshireman, "but you must not call it Homer." Emerson thought Chapman's "the heroic translation," but added, "The most literal prose version is the best of all." Cowper's translation occupied him during twenty-one years.

convey the manner and spirit of Homer's verse than almost any lines of formal translation—in verse or prose—of Homer that I ever came upon. The passage moves thus:

"When the first light dawned on the earth, and the birds awoke, and the brave river was heard rippling confidently seaward, and the nimble, early rising wind rustled the oak leaves about our tent, all men, having reinforced their bodies and their souls with sleep, and cast aside doubt and fear, were invited to unattempted adventures."

Now that is Homer all over, and what I purpose by submitting it to you is to bear in upon you your own thought as you read it and muse upon it. And that thought, or impression, will be, I am confident, that this passage is not archaic or unreal, but is a good, simple, trustworthy thing—so concrete that it *is* a thing and still so exquisite that it is poetry. It relates to the Monday morning of a Yankee on a Massachusetts river and yet it is an imitation, frankly slavish, of a writer whose personal history is so remote that it is lost, quite lost, in the mists of time. But if you apply any one of scores upon scores of passages in the remote man's book to life as it moves around you and by you every day, you will see readily enough that only his personal history—which does not so much matter—is remote. His book is with us, here and now.

Nay, the life never goes out of Homer, but life—or at least the gusty enjoyment of life—may truly be said to have gone out of a generation that ceases to enjoy Homer. They tell me this generation has ceased so to do. I do not believe it. Men alongside whom I work and who occasionally toss hitherward a word of encouragement, or a severe admonition, were severe when they were told that one of the sketches in this collection would be about the "Odyssey."

"Now," said they, "you are killing the series. It started well. But if you are going to keep on lugging in the Homers and Goethes we wash our hands of you. Who reads Homer anyway?"

"Somebody must," said I. "The publishers continue to issue edition after edition of him, both the cheap and the dear. They

certainly don't do that solely for love of him. Somebody must buy the book and read it."

"Students," said they, and the tone was withering.

Good! Let us all be students then. Who is a student that his loves should affright us? He may be as human as you and I.

I mind me of a student—himself a great, Homeric, hearty build of man—who flourished nearly forty years ago in one of the great schools of this country. He was a teacher, too—outstanding among American Greekists—but he never ceased to be a student because he was ever seeking and relishing life and knowledge, and welding them together and imparting them in the most delightful and profitable way. And it was his wont, when the routine of the class hour in the "Odyssey" had been cleared away and we—some forty or fifty sophomores—had sufficiently dishonored ourselves by our halting and inept translating at sight, it was his wont, I say, to seize the book and read to us in running translation the half dozen pages which we, in our turn, were to have ready for him at the next session of the class.

I think he did this partly because he loved to and partly—for he was a man at once valiant and patient—because he hoped that thus he could put some grace into our minds, some feel and relish for poetry. First, he would read a dozen lines in the rolling Greek and then would say, "And now, ladies and gentlemen, Anglice"—he clung to some of the older scholastic locutions—and then in a full-voiced rumble and in able-bodied English he would roll forth the Homeric tale. So huge of frame was he that, to settle himself comfortably in his chair for these treats, he would have to tip the chair back, and so sitting and swaying, chair and all, backward and forward as he read, he intoned grace into us. And often he would make a little anticipatory pause and say, "This is very delicious, ladies and gentlemen —very delicious! You will mark the poet's intense humanity. The race does not change much."

It is no extravagance of memory when I say that he would quite literally smack his lips on "this is very delicious, ladies and

gentlemen!"—and then, beaming and resonant, he would sail back into the text.

Nor is it exaggeration to say that the quarter hour became a precious thing. Even the crew of unlicked, heedless sophomores, with all their petty sophistications and their brutal impatience, could not stand out against the spell of it, and we were sorry to hear the chimes that dismissed us.

That quarter hour was a great thing for us because it taught us that Homer is no superstition, that love of him is no affectation, and that enjoyment of him is one of the ever renewed, ever renewing compensations for what we think of as the humdrum of existence.

That is why to this day I think with tenderness and respect and gratitude upon my debt to Albert Pattengill, associate professor of Greek in the University of Michigan. Long since his work ended, but his service lives. In a sense that would please him, this little chapter, unworthy of him though it is, still is his. He will understand and extenuate. He always did.

"The humdrum of existence," I said.

To Homer nothing was humdrum—neither the old house dog (Book XVII) "wagging his tail and dropping both his ears, but without strength now to draw nearer to the master," whom he has not seen for twenty years, nor the swineherd, faithful Eumæus, going forth on a bitter night from his well-ordered hut to see that all is in order outside. Those humble caretakers of the riches of the world are never unimportant. It was only about a century and a half ago that the rest of the world began to fathom that in any very specific way, and so came the French revolution.

But the all-interested Homer knew nearly thirty centuries ago that those people are interesting and important, and no detail of their hard routine escaped him. The deeply pathetic Book XIV of the "Odyssey" closes with a tiny etching of the watch by night of the faithful Eumæus. The swineherd, having made a decent place for his returned master (still in disguise) in the hut, leaves him asleep. But he must have a care for the stock which, in the evil days that have come upon the house of Odysseus, is one of

the remaining sources of its wealth. So Eumæus has no mind to lie there in the hut away from the boars. Therefore:

"First he cast his sharp sword about his strong shoulders, then he clad him in a very thick mantle, to keep the wind away; and then he caught up the fleece of a great and well fed goat, and seized his sharp javelin, to defend him against dogs and men. Then he went to lay him down even where the white tusked boars were sleeping, beneath the hollow of the rock, in a place of shelter from the North Wind."

That, you may say, is a little thing and a simple. But it is life, and how life has to be lived by the caretakers of the world. It is so all the way through the "Odyssey"—the ways of the artificers, the comings and goings of the serving maids, the heating of water for the bath, the prattle of a little boy when his rich father takes him into the orchard and says to him, "Now, those thirteen pear trees, and those ten apple trees, and those two score fig trees, and those fifty rows of vines are thine, my son, and see that thou doest well by them, for then shalt thou be worthy of the greater inheritance."

There is no past when Homer writes, for the past he touches with such urge and intimacy that it becomes our present.

Nor could I ever see why any person, however unscholared he accounts himself, should allow himself to be frightened away from Homer's good story on the plea that it is unfolded in a book described as "a classic." Classics are books which mankind has agreed that it cannot spare to oblivion. They are not the possessions solely of the recondite, although the recondite have done them almost irreparable mischief by taking that exclusive attitude toward them.

What is Homer's story in the "Odyssey"? Why, naught more than the story of a powerful and gifted prince who went to a ten year war (the Trojan war) and helped to win it; who then, faring homeward, fell into the hands of a designing woman—that baggage Calypso yclept nymph—who wandered far by land and sea and had various adventures both natural and supernatural, who, reaching home at last, found his palace on the island of Ithaca off the west coast of Greece infested by parasites contending for his wife's hand and lands, for they thought him dead,

and who, in one of the grandest fights on record, cleanses his house and comes into his own again.

Nothing aloof or recondite in that surely—just a hearty, gusty, intensely sympathetic story of passion and intrigue, of who was a good, helpful fellow-human and who was not, of who deserved well of heaven and who did not.

Holding the center of the stage in this epic (an epic being a tale so harmonious and resounding, so vivid and varied, that men liked best to hear it uttered in a kind of recitative and to the music of the lyre) is Odysseus, who became the ideal man of the competent Greeks because he could shift for himself and always land right side up with more or less care. Some say the gods helped him. So they did, but they helped him because they liked him and they liked him because he was willing to help himself. He was the ever-ready.

That is the spirit of Homer. Ajax, about to meet Hector in single combat, bids the Greeks pray to the gods for him, and while they are praying he is *putting on his armor.* And one of Homer's pilots, seeing a storm approaching, falls to his prayers and invokes his tutelar dæmons, neglecting not the while to *hold to the rudder and let down the main yard.* "And fail not," says Homer to the husbandman, "fail not, before either you plow or sow, to pray to the terrestrial Jove and the venerable Ceres, but do it *with hand upon the plowtail.*"

Not alone matchless story teller, this ageless Homer of ours, but character builder, too.

## XXXVIII

## BACON'S "ESSAYS"

(First published in separate groups in 1597, 1612 and 1625)

*There happened in my time one noble speaker, who was full of gravity in his speaking. His language was nobly censorious. No man ever spake more neatly, more pressly, more weightily, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness, in what he uttered.*

BEN JONSON.

*It [the book of Bacon's essays] may be read from beginning to end in a few hours, and yet after the twentieth reading one seldom fails to remark in it something overlooked before.*

DUGALD STEWART.

TRAVEL is, next to books, the most important thing in man's culture—not so much to travel afar as to travel knowingly. Travel, if men use it shrewdly, is a book in action. To know how to travel is, then, almost everything.

Yet naught is rarer than the instructed traveler—the profitable man afield. Many a time have you observed those melancholy beings who, having reached at expense of time and comfort and much money a capital that fires the instructed traveler's imagination, know not whither to turn. It is all bricks and mortar to them. They sit in forlorn idleness; they tipple, they gorge, they gossip, and what zest remains in them is given to the belated newspaper from home. Lassitude envelops them and nostalgia presses them down. 'Tis pity 'tis so, for we are, so far as we know, in this interesting world but once, and not for long.

Travel can so humanize, enlarge, refine and instruct the traveler and can so assuage prejudice, which is the mother of hates, that to know how to travel is almost as important to a man as to know how to make a fixed place for himself in the world.

So Francis Bacon—who frankly said that it seemed to him that

his little book, which you may read through in some 260 minutes, was a best seller because it was about matters which "come home to men's business and bosoms"—packed into his book an essay on how to travel. It is selected from his fifty-eight essays for quotation here not because it is the best, or one of the best, but because it is compact and suggestive. There is in it half a page that opens up a whole illustrious town; it might be London, or Paris, or Rome, or—home, if a man hath eyes and good will to see his home.

When next—for the mood of dull indifference will one time or another crib, cabin, and confine us all—when next the world seems uninviting, read "Essay XVIII: of Travel." It makes, as the foreign correspondents say when their newspapers have brought them back to the home office for a spell, "it makes the feet itch." Here is a bit:

"The things to be seen and observed are the courts of princes, especially when they give audience to ambassadors; the courts of justice, while they sit and hear causes; and so of consistories ecclesiastic; the churches and monasteries, with the monuments that are therein extant; the walls and fortifications of cities and towns; and so the havens and harbors, antiquities and ruins, libraries, colleges, disputations, and lectures, where they are; shipping and navies; houses and gardens of state and pleasure, near great cities; armories, arsenals, magazines, exchanges, burses, warehouses, exercises of horsemanship, fencing, training of soldiers, and the like; comedies, such whereunto the better sort of persons do resort; treasuries of jewels and robes; cabinets and rarities; and, to conclude, whatsoever is memorable in the places where they go; after all which the tutors and servants ought to make diligent inquiry. As for triumphs, masks, feasts, weddings, funerals, capital executions, and such shows, men need not be put in mind of them: yet they are not to be neglected."

There is an education in that—a curriculum. It is *travel* versus mooning about. And how applicable it is! Omit the "walls and fortifications" and the "ruins," and it names not one object that cannot be adequately studied in even so new a city as Chicago. Nor of "walls and fortifications" is that city wholly barren, for there are in its encircling forest preserves certain pale vestiges of forts which carry the mind back to the interesting days of the French occupation of the middle west.

In his three pithy pages Bacon goes into the detail of the saga-

cious traveler's procedure. He would not have him sit fast in some Grand Hotel de l'Europe, be it ever so grand—

" . . . When he stayeth in one city or town, let him change his lodging from one end and part of a town to another, which is a great adamant of acquaintance; let him sequester himself from the company of his countrymen, and diet in such places where there is good company of the nation where he travelleth."

And whom would you seek when you fare into foreign parts? He says these persons are the most profitable:

"As for the acquaintance which is to be sought in travel, that which is most of all profitable is acquaintance with the secretaries and employed men of ambassadors; for so, in traveling in one country, he shall suck the experience of many: let him also see and visit eminent persons in all kinds, which are of great name abroad, that he may be able to tell how the life agreeth with the fame."

Always in Bacon's book it is the essentials of things with which he confronts us; life as it has to be lived every day; affairs as they have to be transacted; treaties as they have to be negotiated; wars as they have to be fought; taxes and how they must be levied to the enriching of the state without the impoverishing of the people. Of the fifty-eight topics in the series of little papers which he began in 1597 and which he was to carry through twenty-eight years of his life, there is not one that is not as live a topic to-day as it was 330 years ago. He wrote of matters which we have to think about and act upon or we are lost—"Truth," "Adversity," "Parents and Children," "Marriage and Single Life," "Love," "Seditions and Troubles," "Superstition," "Delays," "Innovations," "Friendship," "Expense," "Regimen of Health," "Suspicion"—O, a most salutary one!—"Revenge"—which is wisdom double distilled—"Studies"—of which Macaulay said that not Thucydides himself had anywhere compressed so much thought into so small a space—"Faction," "Praise," "Vainglory," "Anger," and "True Greatness of Kingdoms and Estates."

That last is naught less than a plea for national defense of peculiar timeliness and import to our carefree people. It is also one of the longest of the essays—a dozen pages in my old, worn leather bound copy—but you can read it in as many minutes. (The

copyist and I timed it.) And then you could take your statesmen and generals back to it and they—if they were far visioned men—could find matter for a session of congress in it. Hark to the rumble of some of its lines!

"Walled towns, stored arsenals and armories, goodly races of horse, chariots of war, elephants, ordnance, artillery, and the like; all this is but a sheep in a lion's skin, except the breed and disposition of the people be stout and warlike. Nay, number (itself) in armies importeth not much, where the people are of weak courage; for, as Virgil saith, 'it never troubles the wolf how many the sheep be.'"

Further on he says:

"Many are the examples of the great odds between number and courage: so that a man may truly make a judgment, that the principal point of greatness in any state is to have a race of military men. Neither is money the sinews of war (as it is trivially said) where the sinews of men's arms in base and effeminate people are failing; for Solon said well to Croesus (when in ostentation he showed him his gold): 'Sir, if any other come that hath better iron than you, he will be master of all this gold.'"

And then this—with such spacious statesmanship and so much solid, practical everyday sense in it that a prime minister profitably could ponder it and average folk can "get it" at a glance:

"The blessing of Judas and Issachar will never meet; that the same people, or nation, should be both the lion's whelp and the ass between burdens; neither will it be, that a people overlaid with taxes should ever become valiant and martial."

The quality of Bacon was pith. Right or wrong, he *said* it. If you learn a thing from him you learn it for life. You can read almost any one of the essays in from one to four minutes—and then have something to mull over the rest of the day. Take that one on "Studies"—Macaulay's admiration—it is shorter than an average length editorial in an American newspaper, but Archbishop Whately in his grand edition of Bacon gives it *thirty-nine pages* of annotations, so stimulating, provocative and allusive is it. It is the one in which Bacon tells us why to read, how to read ("some books to be tasted, some swallowed, some chewed and digested"), and what reading does for us.

His pith may be even more tellingly illustrated. There are not alone little pages but also there are one-line sentences of his that hold a sermon, a treatise, a book within them; that lay down a policy of state which would save a people, or a line of conduct which a man might follow from adolescence to old age and be the better man for it. These two lines are from "Of Revenge":

"Revenge is a kind of wild justice, which the more man's nature runs to, the more ought law to weed it out.

"A man that studieth revenge keeps his own wounds green."

Consider these three from "Of Innovations"—a treatise in each one:

"As the births of living creatures at first are ill shapen, so are all innovations, which are the births of time.

"It were good, therefore, that men, in their innovations, would follow the example of time itself, which indeed innovateth greatly, but quietly, and by degrees scarce to be perceived.

"A froward retention of custom is as turbulent a thing as an innovation; and they that reverence too much old times are but a scorn to the new."

I love the unerringness of aim in these from "Of Love"—the clean, swift, firmly-delivered stroke—no attitudinizing—no delaying:

"I know not how, but martial men are given to love; I think it is but as they are given to wine; for perils commonly ask to be paid in pleasures.

"Nuptial love maketh mankind; friendly love perfecteth it; but wanton love corrupteth and embaseth it."

And this for the employing class who are too quickly kind—it is from "Of Followers and Friends":

"It is good discretion not to make too much of any man at the first; because one cannot hold out that proportion."

This one is for a people beginning to be rasped and weakened under the iniquity of uncurbed, insane accumulations of treasure in few hands:

"Money is like muck, not good except it be spread."

But for all his solidity, Bacon can turn you the prettiest phrases. They peep out from his pages like the blue corn-flowers in the utile farmer's field:

"God Almighty first planted a garden: and indeed it is the purest of human pleasures.

"The speaking in perpetual hyperbole is comely in nothing but in love.

"A dance is a measured pace, as a verse is a measured speech."

Now come we to the mournful part of this chapter. For Bacon's was the exceptional *mind* which, although it grandly remained aloft, still could touch and nobly instruct the average mind, and here also was the exceptional *man* who in conduct fell so far below the average man that the average man does not to this day know whether most to despise or most to pity Francis Bacon, Baron Verulam, Viscount St. Albans—"Of Science the Light, of Eloquence the Law," as the inscription hath it beneath the statue of him in quiet St. Michael's church at St. Albans. He knew so well what was right and wise that his book is a kind of Bible of practical morality; he did so ill that after he had lain 281 years in his tomb his townspeople declined to make him, who had been their glory even as he became their shame, a conspicuous figure in the noble pageant which commemorated in 1907 their illustrious annals.

And so when we read his little book we have to keep an eye open to what we may call the "knew-betters" in it. He knew better—no man better. Here are three of those damning "knew-betters":

"Divide with reason between self-love and society; and be so true to thyself, as thou be not false to others. It is a poor center of a man's actions, himself.

" . . . and certainly it is the nature of extreme self-lovers, as they will set a house on fire and it were but to roast their eggs.

"Set it down to thyself, as well to create good precedents, as to follow them."

He said that "the place of justice is a hallowed place"—and he made it a sty. He said that "roughness breedeth hate; even

reproofs from authority ought to be grave, not taunting"—and he, as attorney general, stood by and helped to rack the old, reverend, and guiltless Peacham in order to extort a confession of treasonable utterance in a sermon which Peacham never had preached. There was no height to which he did not write, and there was no meanness to which he could not descend. He wrote apothegms for the guidance of statesmen, and he corrupted the administration of the state at the fountain head—the fount of justice and the pure administration of it. No man had a keener eye for insincerity in human motives, but from childhood he was a slavish flatterer. Of love, of friendship, of fealty, he spoke as a god, and he cruelly betrayed and persecuted—he called it prosecution—the most generous friend he ever had. He tells us how rightly to control our expenses and how wisely to administer our affairs, and he was a spendthrift, twice arrested for debt, a lover of ostentation and devoured with pride of place. No man knew better the perils, temptations and inconveniences of high office, and no man of his time more fawningly and persistently sought office. He was not alone faithless to the Cecils and faithless to Essex—he was faithless to himself.

On the printed page he made virtue lovely and puissant, and as high justiciar of the realm he took bribes and sold judgments. He was the legal glory of his age, and he was that thing thieves most despise—a double-crosser. He loved luxury as an oriental loves it, but no man was able more readily to turn to and find comfort in those philosophic studies which are at once a discipline so severe and a consolation so profound. His knaveries were a stench in the nostrils of an era that was by no means squeamish, but his book, after three centuries, still deserves to be taken from the shelf with a reverent hand and read with a thankful, humble heart.

He remains to our age what he must have been to thoughtful men in his own—a mournful enigma. Was he the strongest of bad men, or the most fallible of weak men, or the most proficient of hypocrites? Modern pathology has yet to give us the answer. The premature flowering of his genius, his abnormally sensitive constitution, and those fainting fits to which even slight at-

mospheric changes subjected him may be the thread which one day will lead psycho-analysts through the labyrinth of—in Macaulay's austere phrase—"so much glory and so much shame."

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The first appearance of the foregoing chapter caused a not uninteresting newspaper controversy of which the following letters are sufficiently representative:

"A Chance for an Argument"

"Mr. James O'Donnell Bennett's paper on Bacon in Sunday's *Tribune* is astonishing—not for its praise, but its censure. After his broadminded comments on Milton, Goldsmith, Pepys, and others, it is a shock to find him raking in the philippic of Macaulay and the libels of the Essex-Villiers party of James I's court and assailing one of the greatest and most upright—I repeat it!—figures of the English bench as a 'double-crosser,' a 'hypocrite,' and a 'bad man.'

"Macaulay, worshiper of the Whigs and reviler of the Stuarts (after they had gone), laid himself out to crucify James' chief justice two centuries after his death and with only the evidence of his accusers before him. He whitewashed the traitor Essex and assailed the crown counsel with a virulence no less bitter, if more polished, than that exhibited by the Jeffries that Macaulay excoriated.

"And Mr. Bennett follows suit, and even after the publication of Spedding's 'Letters and Life of Francis Bacon' and the papers of Prof. Mitchell and Dr. Adamson, imitates the Athenian mob that ostracized Themistocles and prosecuted Pericles.

"I will not venture an argument; I am not equipped for such a task; but I will point to two facts in the case of the crown versus Bacon:

"First, that the sentence was only partially executed, the fine was remitted, and the imprisonment was only nominal, from which we may infer that the object of the prosecution was the ousting of the lord chancellor and the reinstatement of the other faction.

"Second, that there were no appeals in any of the cases in which the judge was accused.

"If there had been injustice in the decisions, we might expect, after the downfall of the judge, that there would be appeal and reversal. But there was none. I would be glad to see the case presented by scholars conversant with the history of the subject as revealed by documents recently published and uninfluenced by either Whig or Tory.

"John T. Bramhall."

"No Argument, but an Answer"

"In his interesting letter on Bacon which appeared in the *Tribune* of July 8 under the heading, 'A Chance for an Argument,' Mr. John T. Bramhall implies that my comment on the chancellor's fall is either wronghearted and wanton or is based on imperfect knowledge of that strange man.

"I do not think there is any chance for an argument, nor, I believe, will any man so think who takes Bacon's own words in the only sense in which a sane utterer of them could expect them to be taken. Bacon confessed everything, not once but several times, and explicitly.

"In his second confession, which was made in writing to his fellow peers, he said:

" 'Upon advised consideration of the charges, descending into my own conscience, and calling my memory to account so far as I am able, I do plainly and ingenuously [ingenuously had a more specific meaning then than now] confess that I am guilty of corruption, and do renounce all defence, and put myself on the grace and mercy of your lordships.'

"To the lords officially sent to learn from him whether this confession had been signed by him, he replied:

" 'My lords, it is my act, my hand, my heart. I beseech your lordships to be merciful to a broken reed.'

"Later, in pleading for mercy, Lord Bacon said:

" 'I assure myself that if it be reformation that is sought, the very taking away the seal, upon my general submission, will be as much in example for these 400 years as any furder [sic] severity.'

"The verdict, which imposed heavy penalties upon the chancellor, was unanimous, and of it he said more than once:

" 'It was the justest censure in parliament that was these two hundred years.'

"I could give other passages in the same strain out of the chancellor's mouth. Some of them are coupled with such craven whining that one is in doubt whether most to despise him in his sin or in his florid contrition.

"From the time of Basil Montagu in the first quarter of the last century to the time of Thomas Fowler in the last quarter of that century, much research and ingenuity have been applied to the effort to rehabilitate Francis Bacon. That effort was not wasted, for it brought to light much valuable information, but it was not successful. James Spedding gave a third of his long and scholarly life to trying to make an honest man out of Bacon. When Dean Church wrote his life

of Bacon he acknowledged his deep indebtedness to Spedding, but he added, 'I find myself most reluctantly obliged to differ from him.' No sounder verdict was ever passed on Bacon than that of the dean of St. Paul's, who said: 'It was not only an unhappy life; it was a poor life . . . he was not true to what he knew.'

"As to the charge, which horrifies Mr. Bramhall, that Bacon was a 'double-crosser,' there is abundant evidence to sustain it. He took money from litigants against whom later he decided (see the testimony in re the case of Lady Wharton). In short, he would not stay bought.

"Carlyle tried in vain to make Frederick the Great as good as he was great. James Spedding had no better success with Francis the Great.

"JAMES O'DONNELL BENNETT."

## XXXIX

## THE DIARY OF SAMUEL PEPYS

(Written in shorthand during the decade from 1660 to 1669. Deciphered during the years from 1819 to 1822 and first published in part, in 1825. First publication in more nearly complete form in 1875-79. First publication of a still more nearly complete text in 1893-99.)

*CERTAIN TRIALS AND OBSERVATIONS OF SAMUEL PEPYS AT A GLANCE:*

*. . . I to the taking of my wife's kitchen accounts at the latter end of the month, and there find seven shillings wanting, which did occasion a very high falling out between us, I indeed too angrily insisting upon so poor a thing, and did give her very provoking high words, calling her beggar, and reproaching her friends, which she took very stomachfully and reproached me justly with mine, and I confess, being myself, I cannot see what she could have done less. We parted after many high words very angry, and I to my office to my month's accounts, and find myself worth £1,270, for which the Lord God be praised.*

*I sent for Captain Ferrers to me, who comes with a friend of his, and they and I go to the Theatre, and there saw "Argalus and Parthenia," where a woman acted Parthenia, and came afterwards on the stage in men's clothes, and had the best legs that ever I saw, and I was very well pleased with it. Thence to the Ringo alehouse.*

*This day Pierce do tell me, among other news, the late frolick and debauchery of Sir Charles Sidly and Buckhurst, running up and down all the night, through the streets; and at last fighting, and being beat by the watch and clapped up all night; and how the King [Charles II] takes their parts; and my Lord Chief Justice Keeling hath laid the constable by the heels to answer it next Sessions: which is a horrid shame. How the King and these gentlemen did make the fiddlers of Thetford, this last progress, to sing them all the bawdy songs they could think of.*

*But Lord! to see the absurd nature of Englishmen, that cannot forbear laughing and jeering at everything that looks strange.*

*Strange to say what delight we married people have to see these poor fools decoyed into our condition.*

*I see it is impossible for the King to have things done as cheap as other men.*

*It raining hard upon the water, I put ashore and sheltered myself, while the King came by in his barge. . . . but methought it lessened my esteem of a king, that he should not be able to command the rain.*

*A gentleman never dresses so well as the dancing master, and an ordinary fiddler makes better music for a shilling than a gentleman will do after spending forty, and so in all the delights of the world almost.*

(*Lord's day.*) *To church in the morning. But thanks be to God, since my leaving drinking of wine, I do find myself much better and do mind my business better, and do spend less money, and less time lost in idle company.*

*If a man should be out and forget his last sentence, then his last refuge is to begin with an Utcumque.* [*However.*]

Didst thou see the King to-day? What said he, and whom of his doxies did he most shamelessly fondle? And what of his brother, the Duke? What of those Dutch guns booming on the lower Thames? What is this week's toll of the plague? Some say 'tis six thousand, but others fear the true number nearer ten thousand. What of the opera; what of the play? Alas, one trouble no sooner mended than another descends! Now 'tis fire, and here is my Lord Mayor faltering along in Canning Street like a man spent, with a handkerchief about his neck, and, to the King's message that houses be pulled down, he cries like a fainting woman, "Lord, what can I do? I am spent: people will not obey me." What, now, the news from France? Well, 'tis said the King of France doth make a sport of us, and declares that he knows no reason why his cousin, the King of England, should not be as willing to let him have his kingdom as that the Dutch should take it from him, and 'tis a most wretched thing that ever we should live to be in this most contemptible condition. What of the fashions? Which is the best liked book of the day? What the latest news from our embassy to Spain, and what the new scandal about the King? That last is this—that he hath taken ten times more care and pains in making friends between my Lady Castlemaine and Mrs. Stewart, when they have fallen out, than ever he did to save his kingdom. Later: Now runs it that my Lady

Castlemaine is in a higher command over the King than ever—not as a mistress, for she scorns him, but as a tyrant to command him. Dost thou ask me of this Lord's day's discourse? 'Twas not much. Mr. Mills made an unnecessary sermon upon Original Sin, neither understood by himself nor the people.

Such is Pepys' book—one of the most entertaining and instructive of books—one of the saddest, too, and never written for our eyes.

In this book, which was written in cipher and lay for 153 years unknown and unvalued before a patient young Cambridge scholar put in three years of fourteen-hour days decoding it, a decade of one man's life becomes the cross-section of a period highly interesting and certainly the most disgraceful in English annals; a period when the King of France laughed at the King of England and the King of England took a pension from the King of France; a period when poltroons dug up the body of Cromwell to make it a public mock, and disemboweled amid joyous shouts the partisans of Cromwell who had survived him; a period when gentlemen entrusted with large affairs of state hired tutors to teach them the multiplication table before taking up the burdens of office; a period when those gentlemen—gentlemen painted by the courtly brushes of Sir Peter Lely and Geoffrey Kneller—were, not to put too fine a point on it, lousy; a period when the same gentlemen beat little boy servants until their (the gentlemen's) arms were "very weary"; a period when great nobles were panders to the sovereign; a period when bribes, which the gentlemen who accepted them called "compliments," withered the right arm of the state—its navy; a period fraught then as now with stern lessons to every nation that allows the passion for pleasure to get the upper hand of its moral sense. Destroyed then is every other sense—sense of decency, sense of honor, sense of proportion, common sense.

It was the period of the Merry Monarch; the period of Merry hell.

Samuel Pepys tells it all.

Seek you in his pages a little picture—only half a dozen lines—of how mass-hysteria can make a ghastly fiesta out of the rancors of a civil war fought a dozen years before? The date of Mr.

Pepys' entry is October 13, 1660; the scene the open place in front of Charing Cross station which you, perhaps, have often traversed; the leading actor a general of the Cromwellian armies and judge of Charles I:

"To my Lord's in the morning, where I met with Captain Cuttance—but my Lord not being up I went out to Charing Cross, to see Major-General Harrison hanged, drawn, and quartered; which was done there, he looking as cheerful as any man could do in that condition. He was presently cut down, and his head and heart shown to the people, at which there was great shouts of joy."

Is not *looking as cheerful as any man could do in that condition* a winsome touch?

Mr. Pepys, under date of December 1, 1660, takes you into an English gentleman's home of the period of Merry Monarch and Merry hell—his own home:

"This morning, observing some things to be laid not as they should be by the girl, I took a broom and basted her till she cried extremely, which made me vexed, but before I went out I left her appeased."

Come again two years later:

"Hearing from my wife and the maids, complaints made of the boy, I called him up, and with my whip did whip him till I was not able to stir, and yet I could not make him confess any of the lies that they tax him with. At last, not willing to let him go away a conqueror, I took him in task again, and pulled off his frock to his shirt, and whipped him until he did confess that he did drink the whey, which he had denied, and pulled a pink, and above all did lay the candlestick upon the ground in his chamber, which he had denied this quarter of a year. I confess it is one of the greatest wonders that ever I met with that such a little boy as he could possibly be able to suffer half so much as he did to maintain a lie. I think I must be forced to put him away. So to bed, with my arm very weary."

Or, perhaps, leaving the home of a representative man of the middle class—a useful servant of the state, and a lover of books and of music—you would have a glimpse of the entourage of the head of the state—that merry soul for whom men had bled and died and ancient families had impoverished themselves. The period of Pepys' entry is eight years after the restoration of Charles II:

"Creed told me this day how when the King was at my Lord Cornwallis's, when he went last to Newmarket, that being there on a Sunday, the Duke of Buckingham did in the afternoon to please the King make a bawdy sermon to him out of Canticles, . . . and that my Lord Cornwallis did endeavor to get the King a whore, and that must be a pretty girl the daughter of the parson of the place, but that she did get away, and leaped off of some place and killed herself, which if true is very sad."

Pepys lifts out the house fronts, knocks down the palace walls, bares the soul of the seventh decade of seventeenth century England. He was born nearly three centuries ago (1633), but all our knowledge of him and of the decade his book covers is as intimate, specific, and lively as this morning's paper or the social circle of this afternoon. The essence of him is life. Himself a bundle of contradictions, no contradiction in human nature or in nation nature either dismayed or disheartened him. He found both natures entertaining and, better than any other chronicler of the intimacies of English annals, he imparted those annals entertainingly. Himself, too, was infinite entertainment to himself. Hence he must tell all to himself.

After the coronation festivities we have this confession:

"Waked in the morning with my head in a sad taking through last night's drink, which I am very sorry for; so rose and went out with Mr. Creed to drink our morning draft, which he did give me in chocolate to settle my stomach."

But he rises before sunup to read Cicero:

"Up by 4 o'clock in the morning, and read Cicero's Second Oration against Catiline, which pleased me exceedingly; and more I discern therein than ever I thought was to be found in him; but I perceive it was my ignorance, and that he is as good a writer as ever I read in my life."

Intensely amorous, he was faithless to his wife, but he would cry himself to sleep with contrition. Occasionally accepting those "compliments" which were the scandal of his time he yet was by contrast with his colleagues a model of official probity. He loved drink, but he loved work and system more. He loved music and composed prettily, but he would beat a child. He loved his wife,

whom he married when she was fifteen and whom he long outlived, but he would try to seduce a woman in a church. He was quarrelsome but good-hearted, timid but he stuck to his post like a man during the plague, saying to his colleague, Sir William Coventry, "You took your turn of the sword; I must not grudge to take mine of the pestilence." He was sensible and shrewd, and no man saw more clearly the doom the Stuarts were piling up for their house, but he celebrated his thirty-sixth birthday by having the tomb of Katherine of Valois in Westminster Abbey opened and taking the body into his arms and kissing the mouth—"reflecting upon it that I did kiss a Queen and that this was my birthday." She had been dead 232 years—that pretty, piquant Katherine of Shakespeare's play of "Henry V." He was fussy, timid, officious, vain, ostentatious, and often drunken, but so shrewd a man as General Monk called him "the right hand of the navy" and Coventry said he was "the life of the navy office." Nearly two centuries later Macaulay, whose survey of the reign of Charles II is considerably indebted to Pepys' graphic pen, confirmed those verdicts and pronounced him "the ablest man in the English admiralty."

James Russell Lowell summed up Samuel Pepys in his dual character of incessant babbler and shrewd philosopher when he called him "this Polonius-Montaigne."

All the bad, all the good, about himself, all his daily comings and goings in his wanton London of 400,000 souls, all the vulgar ructions at home and all the fond episodes of reconciliation, the dinners he ate, the clothes he wore, the periwigs he bought, the sermons he heard, the gossip he devoured, the vermin he had his wife comb from his hair—all—all—all he tells.

Why did he do it? Why did he leave this record of so much folly and so much weakness? No man can say, but speculation long has been allowed its privileges and abundantly has it exercised them. My own guess as to Pepys' state of mind is based on frequent observation of newspaper writers bending at 1:30 o'clock in the morning over the hot forms in a composing room to "cut their own stuff." How they hate it!—not the stuff but the cutting of it.

Such, I think, was Mr. Pepys' state of mind. He was a great reporter. For ten years he had written well and his consciousness of his success seems to have been all the immediate reward he sought. He knew that he had given in his six thick volumes of closely written shorthand the very body and essence of his time, and that there were tears and laughter and life in every one of the pothooks and dots and dashes that made up his 3,012 pages of cipher. Ten years of his life and his country's life, as those lives had been lived from hour to hour and from day to day, in weakness and in striving, lay before him in his diaries. He loved them. They were part of him. He could not destroy them. He had not written for print and there was no grim makeup man standing over him and muttering, "Well, Mr. Pepys, you're way overset—as *usual*—and we've got no rubber type on *this* paper." So he was a free agent and could save his own stuff. He knew there was political peril in almost every page of it if it were decoded during his life, but the cipher was intricate and he felt safe.

As to the success posterity might have in decoding the diaries, he was willing to take a chance. Perhaps he hoped that posterity might be successful and perhaps, as Gregory Smith suggests in his excellent introduction to the Messrs. Macmillans' Globe edition of the Diary, he "cherished 'a twinkling hope' of immortality."

A century and a half after he had closed his journals at the age of thirty-six because his eyes were failing, posterity first obtained knowledge of his secrets, his pith, color and spontaneity, his follies and his irresistible humanness. The discovery cost him his dignity but it gave him immortality.

Deciphering was extremely difficult. It was begun in 1819 by John Smith, then an undergraduate at the University of Cambridge and later a clergyman. He left record of his struggles with Pepys' code:

"I engaged with the late master of Magdalene College, Cambridge, to decipher the whole of the diary from the six closely written volumes of the original shorthand MS., little thinking how difficult, how laborious, and how unprofitable a task I had undertaken. The distinguished stenographer, the late William Brodie Gurney, to whom I

showed the MS. at the outset, positively assured me that neither I nor any other man would ever be able to decipher it, and two other eminent professors of the art confirmed his opinion. I persevered, nevertheless, and in April, 1822, I completed the deciphering of the whole diary, having worked for nearly three years at it, usually for twelve and fourteen hours a day, with frequent wakeful nights."

The fascination of Pepys has its source in his genius for imparting and sustaining the warm, disarming sense that a perfectly candid fellow-being is speaking to us. We never resent him. Times have changed since his time and mankind grows more decent. But Samuel Pepys remains bone of our bone, flesh of our flesh. Different errors, other follies than his, each of us that took an inexorable pen in hand might be obliged to record about ourselves. But could we record fewer that are of less essential mischief in their effect upon mankind than his were? As to the essential good which Samuel Pepys did, fortunate is he who can record so much about himself. For Pepys in a selfish and corrupt age was generous to the poor and loyal to his trust.

The last lines he wrote in his beloved diary waft to us across the centuries a note of resignation so lofty that it would extenuate many follies and errors. The date is May 31, 1669:

" . . . And so I betake myself to that course, which is almost as much as to see myself go into my grave; for which, and all the discomforts that will accompany my being blind, the good God prepare me!"

## XL

## GIBBON'S "DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE"

(First volume first published in 1776; the last volume in 1788.)

*THE BOOK—*

*The most perfect historical composition that exists in any language.*

FREDERIC HARRISON.

*Gibbon has a strength rare with such finish. He built a pyramid, and then enameled it.*

(*Journals*, vol. VII, p. 100.) RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

*AND THE THEME*

*Rome is the central lake in which all the streams of ancient history lose themselves, and out of which all the streams of modern history flow. Rome is the bridge between the past and the present. . . . The decline and fall of the Roman empire—the greatest, perhaps, and most awful scene in the history of mankind. . . . A revolution which will ever be remembered and is still felt by the nations of the earth.*

EDWARD GIBBON.

THE most important thing for us to consider in talking together of these acclaimed masterpieces is not their grandeur but their urgency. Mankind has united to pronounce them great. But do they press upon us for a reading? Do they hold a meaning for us, and to us with the living voice speak a living message?

It is so that Gibbon speaks.

Why! It was only eight years ago that a prophecy he made more than a century and a quarter ago came vividly to fulfillment.

If you remember anything that Edward Gibbon ever wrote you will remember that passage of prophecy. It comes in his "Memoirs of My Life and Writings," one of the most entertaining auto-

biographies in our language because it is all about a purpose and what came of it. Thus the prophecy:

"Our immortal Fielding was of the younger branch of the Earls of Denbigh, who draw their origin from the Counts of Habsburg. . . . Far different have been the fortunes of the English and German divisions of the family of Habsburg: the former, the knights and sheriffs of Leicestershire, have slowly risen to the dignity of a peerage; the latter, the Emperors of Germany and Kings of Spain, have threatened the liberty of the old and invaded the treasures of the new world. The successors of Charles the Fifth may disdain their brethren of England; but the romance of Tom Jones, that exquisite picture of human manners, will outlive the palace of the Escurial and the imperial eagle of the house of Austria."

Turn now to the post-war memoirs of Prince Ludwig Windischgraetz. Here is his laconic entry on the crash of the dual monarchy and the flight of the emperor-king:

"In March, 1919, the King took up his abode in Switzerland. The last of the Habsburgs had returned whither the first of his race had come."

Entrancing are the ironies of history.

Ancestors of this Prince Ludwig Windischgraetz fought and wrought alongside the founders of the greatness of the Habsburgs six centuries ago. It remained for their scion in our time to sit with Charles the Last in the deserted palace of Schönbrunn and to write finis to the chapter. The Escurial still stands, but the "imperial eagle of the house of Austria" is in the dust—outlived by "that exquisite picture of human manners."

Is Gibbon's history only a majestic specimen of a courtly and disused style? Is it a marmoreal relic—no life there any more but only stateliness of outline and the mute and austere beauty of something that spoke once with a commanding voice? Most persons like to think so. It gives them an excuse for avoiding a book that does indeed demand severe application.

But they are wrong.

Gibbon's theme was the disintegration, the shattering, the final collapse of the last great republic until ours was born. His story is the story of the final failure of what was for many ages the

most successful enterprise the mind of man had ever conceived or his hand had ever guided. That story comprehends more than thirteen centuries of success and failure. The teller of the tragic tale is specific and instructive. Open his book almost at random. What is this on the first page of Chapter V—that chapter in which he is going to lead us into the scandal of the sale of the empire (in the year 193) to Didius Julianus by the Praetorian guards? On that page these observations are made:

"The power of the sword is more sensibly felt in an extensive monarchy than in a small community. It has been calculated by the ablest politicians that no State, without being soon exhausted, can maintain above the hundredth part of its members in arms and idleness. . . . The tyrant of a single town, or small district, would soon discover that a hundred armed followers were a weak defense against ten thousand peasants or citizens; but a hundred thousand well disciplined soldiers will command, with despotic sway, ten million of subjects; and a body of ten or fifteen thousand guards will strike terror into the most numerous populace that ever crowded the streets of an immense capital."

Does that give you something fresh and suggestive—and old and authoritative—in connection with militarism?

Once more, take the passage which brings Chapter III to a close—a chapter in which Gibbon bears in on—on whom?—on you and me the peril inherent in the vaunted oneness of Europe—of the known world, indeed—in the age of the Antonines. That was about the last quarter of the second century of our era. He begins this passage with the declaration that the division of Europe into a number of independent states, connected, however, with each other by the general resemblance of religion, language, and manners, is productive of the most beneficial consequences to the liberty of mankind. He points out the fact that a modern tyrant, who found naught to restrain him, either in his own sense of what is right or in his care for the good opinion of his own people, would soon hear something to his disadvantage from his neighbors across his frontiers—as our friends the Germans did to their undoing when they crossed the Belgian frontier. He adds that the victim of such a monarch would promptly be given honorable refuge by those neighbors, that among them he would be

able to earn his livelihood and make a new fame—as the Germans who came to our shores after the revolution of 1848 signally did—but, he tells us, all this merciful way out would be closed if the world groaned under absolute unity of administration. His conclusion of the matter is as vivid and poignant as a passage in a tale of adventure:

> "The slave of imperial despotism, whether he was condemned to drag his gilded chain in Rome and the senate, or to wear out a life of exile on the barren rock of Seriphus or the frozen banks of the Danube, expected his fate in silent despair. To resist was fatal, and it was impossible to fly. On every side he was encompassed with a vast extent of sea and land, which he could never hope to traverse without being discovered, seized, and restored to his irritated master. Beyond the frontiers his anxious view could discover nothing, except the ocean, inhospitable deserts, hostile tribes of barbarians, of fierce manners and unknown language, or dependent kings, who would gladly purchase the emperor's protection by the sacrifice of an obnoxious fugitive."

Now, for the sake of being specific, and for the sake of avoiding the familiar and tedious admonition that "you ought to read Gibbon," this little paper has tried first to indicate to those who own the book, as almost everybody does, but who have never looked into it—as almost nobody does—why they might like to look into it. Having been thus self-contained, let the rest of the chapter extol Gibbon in the traditional manner.

That manner is not a pose. If you are unfamiliar with the book, you will surrender to the tradition when you come really to know the book. You will say then, that this colossal work is the most extensive and most resplendent book of information in existence. It is monumental not merely because it is big but because it is majestic. It is momentous not because it is long but because it is alive. It deals with the heroes, the giants, the ogres of humankind. It tells of the leaders who, when we come to think of it, were maneuvering our forefathers—whether we be the lazzaroni and the peddlers in the foreign quarter of an American city or the staid descendants from some North German or mid-England family of yeomen—were maneuvering our forefathers, I say, from conquests on the shores of North Africa

to other conquests on the misty frontiers of a land that we to-day call Scotland.

The first three names mentioned on the first page of "The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" are Nerva, Trajan, and Hadrian; the last two are Raphael and Michael Angelo. Nerva ascended the imperial throne in the year 96; Michael Angelo, whose work we of to-day travel across the wide sea to behold, died in 1564. Between Nerva and Michael Angelo lie nearly fifteen centuries, and the pen of Edward Gibbon has touched them all to life; has made them, if we will heed him, our possession and our lesson. Let us measure him, if only for the satisfaction of curiosity, by rule of thumb:

His story, tireless, curious, moving in the most stately prose our language has compassed, covers nearly 4,000 large octavo pages, not counting its machinery of prefaces and index. That index fills 143 double-column pages in fine print. The events which took place from the time his story begins, not all of which he covered, nor, by the scheme of his work, was obligated to cover, fill thirteen double-column pages of the Encyclopedia Britannica's great chronology, one of the most valuable compilations in print. (It will be found under the word "Chronology" in only the ninth edition of the Britannica, being, unhappily, absent from the eleventh.) But the narrative of Gibbon, the actual movement toward doom and fall, may be said to begin with the opening of the reign of Commodus in the year 180, and the empire's débâcle may, roughly, be said to have come with the fall of Constantinople in the year 1453. Thus nearly thirteen centuries of movement.

Thirteen centuries of the laws, the literature, the social systems, the religions of our remote forefathers; thirteen centuries of their methods of city and of road building, of their errors, their cruelties, their ameliorations one toward another; thirteen centuries of the high personalities that guided them and of the base men who exploited and betrayed them; thirteen centuries of their wars, their tactics, their engineering; thirteen centuries of their constitutions, their general trends and tendencies and

their idiosyncrasies that make us to-day what we are, and thirteen centuries of those subtle influences that still bewilder us while they mold us.

It is a panorama.

Sometimes I think of this book as a kind of Grand Cañon of the Colorado among histories—a book vast, splendid, intricate, which seems at first to unfold only chaos, but, by its mapping of trails that are safe to the foot, by its charting of subterranean rivers that lead to the open sea, by its pointing to the sunlit peaks of human aspiration and by its warning of the depths of human degradation has made itself a precious thing to struggling and bewildered men if they will but heed.

The mighty book became an instant best seller. "I am at a loss," wrote Gibbon in his engaging autobiography, "how to describe the success of the work, without betraying the vanity of the writer," but he sufficiently overcame his scruples to give us these details:

"So moderate were our hopes, that the original impression had been stinted to five hundred, till the number was doubled by the prophetic taste of Mr. Strahan. . . . The first impression was exhausted in a few days; a second and third edition were scarcely adequate to the demand; and the bookseller's property was twice invaded by the pirates of Dublin. My book was on every table, and almost on every toilet; the historian was crowned by the taste or fashion of the day."

Some three and thirty pages further on he is prompted to this salutary reflection, and on its blended strain of justified pride and essential humbleness we may make our due bow of homage to one of the most amiable and illustrious men that ever have adorned the most important of the arts—the art of historical composition:

"I am disgusted with the affectation of men of letters, who complain that they have renounced a substance for a shadow, and that their fame (which sometimes is no insupportable weight) affords a poor compensation for envy, censure, and persecution. My own experience, at least, has taught me a very different lesson: twenty happy years have been animated by the labor of my History, and its success has given me a name, a rank, a character, in the world, to which I should

not otherwise have been entitled. The freedom of my writings has indeed provoked an implacable tribe; but, as I was safe from the stings, I was soon accustomed to the buzzing of the hornets: my nerves are not tremblingly alive, and my literary temper is so happily framed that I am less sensible of pain than of pleasure."

# XLI

## HANS ANDERSEN'S FAIRY TALES

(First published, in part, in 1836)

*. . . And what a delight it must have been for Andersen to see in his dreams this swarm of children's faces by the thousands about his lamp, this throng of blooming, rosy-cheeked little curly-pates, as in the clouds of a Catholic altar-piece, flaxen-haired Danish boys, tender English babies, black-eyed Hindoo maidens—rich and poor, spelling, reading, listening, in all lands, in all tongues, now healthy and merry, weary from sport, now sickly, pale, with transparent skin, after one of the numberless illnesses with which the children of this earth are visited—and to see them eagerly stretch forth this confusion of white and swarthy little hands after each new leaf that is ready! Such devout believers, such an attentive, such an indefatigable public, none other has.*

GEORG BRANDES.

("Eminent Authors of the Nineteenth Century.")

"My life," said Hans Andersen in his serene old age, "is a lovely story, happy and full of incident. If, when I was a boy, and went forth into the world poor and friendless, a good fairy had met me and said, 'Choose now thine own course through life, and the object for which thou wilt strive, and then, according to the development of thy mind, and as reason requires, I will guide and defend thee to its attainment,' my fate could not, even then, have been directed more happily, more prudently, or better. The history of my life will say to the world what it says to me, 'There is a loving God, who directs all things for the best.'"

In its vicissitudes, its hardships, its triumphs that life was a fairy tale come true. The fourteen-year-old boy who came gawking into Copenhagen in 1819, clad in the confirmation suit that a small-town tailoress had made for him from his dead father's old overcoat, lived to be the man who could ride in the king's carriage when he wished to—once he made that wish known to

his good-natured sovereign and it was granted—lived, also, to be the man whom almost every literary notable who visited Copenhagen during a period of forty years sought out and paid homage.

All that story this man wrote out in his old age in the most ingenuous and complacent spirit, and it is because of its spirit that his book is an authentic document among the world's masterpieces of autobiography. It has a right to a place on the shelf with the autobiographies of Benvenuto Cellini, Colley Cibber, Benjamin Franklin and Herbert Spencer. It is different from all those, lacking the excitement and shamelessness of Cellini's book, the spice of Cibber's, the pithiness of Franklin's and the wisdom of Mr. Spencer's, but it is an interesting narrative and important psychology because it is complete self-revelation by a man of genius. Such documents are of great value and of the greatest entertainment, and when one outgrows Hans Andersen's fairy tales, one still does not lose touch with Hans Andersen. The guileless, candid old man of "The Story of My Life" remains a friend whom one likes to hear purling on—and on—and on.

Thus the book of the fairy tales of Hans Christian Andersen becomes one of the important lure-books. A child once introduced to the tales will soon come upon the lovely one called "The Ugly Duckling," and if his reading is being guided by an elder who knows something about anything the child may be so fortunate as to learn that the tale of the ugly duckling is a parable on Hans Andersen's life, with pages of autobiography crowded into it. "The Ugly Duckling" is pleasantly enough—though I am told not perfectly—recast into our language in a volume containing two and twenty of Uncle Hans' fairy tales that is published by the Macmillan Company. It costs $1.75. There are pictures in the book, some of them reproducing exquisite silhouettes Uncle Hans cut out for children, and there is a preface by Francis Hackett.

In the fifth line of "The Ugly Duckling" we are introduced in two and a half lines to the stork who "was walking around on his long red legs and talking Egyptian, because he had learned that language from his mother." When children grow old enough to be improved by prefaces they are not unlikely to be told that

those two and a half lines about the stork and his talk are among the most characteristic of Hans Andersen's fleeting, unexpected touches by which, in a way that seems quite matter-of-fact but that is essentially poetic and delicate, he establishes poetic kinship between his readers and the creatures of his fancy.

Well, the stork was talking Egyptian, for the reason which you know now, and "the corn was yellow, the oats were green, the hay stood in stacks down in the green meadows, and . . . right in the sunshine lay an old manor, surrounded by deep canals, and from the wall down to the water grew big burdock leaves, so high that little children could stand upright under the tallest of them. It was just as wild there as in the thickest wood."

Children accept the first page of "The Ugly Duckling" as rather usual kind of writing, so easily does it move along, and so quietly does the picture it makes take shape before their eyes. No straining for an effect, no pretentiousness in it. But I suspect that such writing, with the wealth of soft color that it carries, is not easy, for if it were there would be more of it—the world so likes it and so treasures it.

Amid the sweet scene the Ugly Duckling was hatched—hatched into a world of trouble and snubs and unkind criticism, and of fun-making in which the source of the laughter was the pain it caused. Just such a world did Hans Andersen encounter when he, with ten Danish rigsdalers in a pocket of his confirmation suit, came to Copenhagen from the thriving manufacturing town of Odense, where in 1805 he was born.

"I think I will go out into the wide world," the Ugly Duckling had said. Hans Andersen had said that also.

The Ugly Duckling saw the swans—"had never before seen anything so beautiful . . . dazzlingly white, they uttered a very strange cry, spread their large splendid wings and . . . mounted so high that the ugly little Duckling had a very strange sensation."

That "very strange sensation" was the beautiful bird's (for he was no ugly duckling, nor ever had been) sudden consciousness of his kinship with the beautiful birds aloft, and mingled with that consciousness was the divine humility which is an attribute of heaven-dowered genius, as distinguished from the kind of

genius that gets itself accepted by means of self-exploitation and self-assertion.

Another important point in the tale is the discipline of pain which the Ugly Duckling undergoes, for without it this could hardly have happened:

"Then all at once the Duckling raised its wings: they beat the air more strongly than before, and bore it strongly away; and before it really knew how all this happened, it was in a large garden, where the apple trees stood in blossom, where the lilac flowers smelt sweet, and hung their long green branches down to the winding canal. Oh, it was so beautiful here, so fresh and springlike! and out from the thicket came three lovely white swans, they rustled their wings, and floated so lightly on the water. The Duckling knew the splendid creatures, and felt a strange sadness."

Soon comes the passage of the revelation of the Ugly Duckling to himself—"no longer a clumsy dark gray bird, hideous and ugly; it was itself a swan"—and then the caresses, and the children dancing around and clapping their hands, and the old swans bowing their heads before the newcomer.

And the Ugly Duckling?:

"Then it felt quite shy, and hid its head under its wings; it hardly knew what to do; it was too happy, but not a bit conceited, because a good heart is never conceited. It thought of how it had been persecuted and mocked at, and now it heard everybody say that it was the loveliest of all lovely birds. And the lilacs bent their branches right down in the water to it, and the sun shone so warm and mild; then it fluffed its feathers, lifted its slender neck, and from its heart came a cry of joy:

"'I didn't dream of so much happiness, when I was the Ugly Duckling!'"

With the Ugly Duckling's story in mind, I never saw the statue of Hans Andersen which stands in the Rosenborg park, near the palace, and the swans floating on the ornamental water in the Botanic garden not far away, nor heard the laughter of the Copenhagen children playing all around, without feeling that tears were coming to my eyes. And the friend of mine that used to go there with me—the tears would come to her eyes.

Perhaps the reason why we were so touched by the beauty of

the scene and its beautiful associations was that we both remembered, and still cherish, a passage which comes in the ninth chapter of Hans Andersen's autobiography, where he is talking of great Thorwaldsen, who lies in an ivy covered grave in the courtyard of a vast treasure house containing his works, and of Oehlenschläger, who is one of the glories of the Danish stage. This is the passage:

" . . . Whilst Thorwaldsen lived, I often, by his own wish, sat at his side. Oehlenschläger was also my neighbor, and in many an evening hour, when no one dreamed of it, my soul was steeped in deep humility, as I sat between these great spirits. The different periods of my life passed before me: the time when I sat on the hindmost bench in the box of the female figurantes, as well as that in which, full of childish superstition, I knelt down there upon the stage and repeated the Lord's Prayer, just before the very place where I now sat among the first and the most distinguished men. . . . Humility and prayer to God for strength to deserve my happiness, filled my heart. May He always enable me to preserve these feelings!"

Back to us, as we sat in the long northern twilight that now seemed to turn the statue of Hans Andersen to gold and now touched his swans with mystery, would come the words with which his book closes. They were written not long after the festival in his birthplace, an occasion which seemed to him fulfillment of "the old prophecy, made when I was a poor boy, going out from Odense, that the town would one day be illuminated for me."

It was a gorgeous fête—music, speeches, poems, troops, torchlight processions. Looking back on it with a full heart and full eyes, the good, vain, garrulous, trustful old man, who as a gullible, awkward young man had been the jest of the capital where now his statue looks out upon the swans, wrote these words:

"The greatest, the highest blessing I could attain was now mine. Now for the first time could I fully and devoutly thank my God and pray:

" 'Leave me not when the days of trial come.' "

But what children best like to have left with them when they are talking of Hans Andersen is not so much the Andersen of

the autobiography as the Uncle Hans of the fairy tales. Such a tale and such an ending, for example, as the tale and the mournful but brave end of that Steadfast Tin Soldier who, like his four and twenty comrades in arms, "had been born of one old tin spoon," who loved a beautiful dancer, and who had many and fearsome trials which he bore gallantly.

Never a whimper from him, even when he ended in the stove. The beauty and pity of the thought brings tears to the eyes of children when they come to the nineteenth word from the end in this closing passage of "The Steadfast Tin Soldier":

"The tin soldier stood there all lighted up, and felt a heat that was terrible; but whether this heat was from the real fire or from love he did not know. The colors had entirely worn off him; but whether this was from the journey or from sorrow nobody could tell. He looked at the little lady, she looked at him, and he was moved, he was melting; but he still stood steadfast, shouldering his musket. Then suddenly the door flew open, and the draught of air caught the dancer, and she flew like a sylph right into the stove to the tin soldier, and flashed up in a flame, and was gone. Then the tin soldier melted down into a lump, and when the servant took the ashes out next day she found him in the shape of a little tin heart. But of the dancer there was only the spangle left, and that was burned as black as coal."

That nineteenth word is "heart." It is the keyword of Hans Andersen. He was all heart, and he holds the heart of childhood the world over in his kind hands.

## XLII

### SHAKESPEARE'S "KING RICHARD III"

(First published in 1597. The consensus of opinion is that it was written three or four years earlier)

*Here pitch our tents, even here in Bosworth field.*—"King Richard III," Act V, Scene 3.

THE first word of this huge melodrama of egoism is its keynote. That word is Now.

> "Now is the winter of our discontent
> Made glorious summer by this sun of York;
> . . . . . .
> Now are our brows bound with victorious wreaths
> . . . . . .
> Grim-visag'd war hath smooth'd his wrinkled front;
> And now, instead of mounting barbed steeds
> To fright the souls of fearful adversaries,
> He capers nimbly in a lady's chamber
> To the lascivious pleasing of a lute."

That is Richard. He has taken stock of the time and the opportunity. He accounts the world ready for him to bustle in.

"For me to bustle in," he says toward the close of the impudent, crackling, briskly calculating, and wholly delightful Scene 1, and "Come, bustle, bustle; caparison my horse," are the words with which he launches himself into the battle that ends the play—and an era.

Clash and rattle of men at arms; bells pealing for victory; the whisper of conspiracy along palace stairways and in prison corridors; defections, treasons, rebellion; crisp equivoke and venomous railing; detected men and guiltless men going with wide amazement to the block; abundance of mouth fillers like "to court an amorous looking-glass," and "this weak piping time of peace," and

"a marvelous proper man," and "flaky darkness breaks within the east," and "God's gentle-sleeping peace," and "divine perfection of a woman" and "diffused infection of a man"; cozzening of weak woman by a mocking devil; youth, overweening, pitiless, and fluent in swift word-play and pert turns of speech. Thus did Shakespeare put every ingredient of great melodrama into a play of which the full title is "The Tragedy of Richard the Third: With the Landing of Earle Richmond and the Battell at Bosworth Field."

Youth everywhere and above all. Richard is nineteen when the play begins and only thirty-three when it ends; Shakespeare was about twenty-nine when he wrote it, and Kit Marlowe, who almost certainly helped in the writing, was the same age when he was killed in a brawl. Youth loves the play, and for youth Richard has an immense fascination. In one of his earlier stories—"The Black Arrow"—Robert Louis Stevenson surrendered to Crookback, sketching him lightly, deftly, and with manifest capitulation to his eerie spell—" . . . girt by steel-clad knights, the bold, black hearted, and ambitious hunchback moved on towards his brief kingdom and his lasting infamy."

A lad who wishes to swing into the pageant-land of William Shakespeare's ten English chronicle plays can do no better than read "The Black Arrow" as a kind of curtain-raiser to entertainment that will give him the essence, the glow, the splendor and the humors of a century and a half of English annals. "King John" will take him out of the twelfth century and into the thirteenth; "Richard II" will show him grandeur in old John of Gaunt and weakness in Richard the faint-hearted; "Henry IV" (Parts I and II) will make him close friend with a larking prince and bad, foolish, irresistible John Falstaff; in "Henry V" he will go to the wars in France and win at Agincourt; in "Henry VI" (Parts I, II, and III) he will march and countermarch with Lancastrians and Yorkists in wars that disemboweled the old feudal order and worked out in blood one more stage of mankind's progress toward democracy; in "Richard III" he will behold the last spasmodic struggles of the feudal order, and he will take his stand on Bosworth field to look out with Henry Tudor—

". . . upon a new land. The Baron was there, the Churchman was there, but there, too, was a swarming multitude who uttered the voice of a third power, more potent to influence kings than priest or noble, the power of the Common People, tilling the soil as of old, but reading their books as not of old, their Bible chief of all, and learning the lessons of self-government, self-restraint, and self-respect."

That passage is from one of the most helpful and eloquent books that parent or teacher can put into the hands of the young reader who is to march with that mighty pageant which begins with "King John." It is the late Prof. Beverley Warner's "English History in Shakespeare's Plays." He was one of the greatest teachers this country ever produced.

As the last stately picture in the gallery of monarchs and roysterers, prelates and peasants, kingmakers and camp followers, chancelors and wailing women, our young reader will behold the courtly festivities, the mournful intrigues, the spectacle of greatness in abandonment that are the highlights of "Henry VIII."

Wonderful march down the ages! From Magna Charta to the dawn of the Reformation. From John, type of royal perfidy, and Falconbridge, type of English manhood, to Wolsey, type of misguided ambition, and Katherine, type of womanly dignity and sweetness in bitter sorrow.

Was there ever such a chronicle from one hand! Homer is pale and cramped beside it. Ten little books that do not take the room of four current novels tell it all. Carlyle said of its opening year:

"Behold, therefore, the England of the year 1200 was no chimerical vacuity or dreamland, peopled with vaporous Fantasms; but a green solid place that grew corn and several other things. The sun shone on it, the viscissitudes of seasons and human fortunes. Cloth was woven and worn, ditches were dug, furrow fields plowed, and houses built. Day by day all men and cattle rose to labor, and night by night returned home to their several lairs. In wondrous Dualism, then as now, lived nations of breathing men, alternating in all ways between life and death, between joy and sorrow, between rest and toil, between hope, hope reaching high as heaven, and fear deep as very hell."

But why, our young reader justly asks, shall we begin with "Richard III" where the tale is closing? Because partly, as it

seems to me, this Richard is so dazzling a figure, alike so charming and so dreadful, and so horrific, so witty and so wicked, so expert a masquerader and so helpless a victim of himself, that he compels our interest in all the close knit tale of his forbears that marched through the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries and in the puissant Henry VIII, son of Richard's conqueror at Bosworth, who came after; in short, because, worsted though he was, Richard was the strongest man of his age. He was vivid, vital, vivacious, and the play about him is William Shakespeare's motion picture play—jerky, sensational, sometimes tasteless, but ever shadowing upon the screen a living, ramping, contriving man facing life and facing death with equal zest. That is why "King Richard III" is the springboard for our beginnings in the reading of English history.

"Books," says Arnold Bennett in the excellent *vade mecum*, "Literary Taste and How to Form It"—"books must be allowed to help one another; they must be skillfully called in to each other's aid."

The young reader who shall plunge from the springboard play of "King Richard III" to the three parts of "Henry VI," where Richard is balefully foreshadowed, or shall take "The Black Arrow" as a kind of curtain raiser to "Richard III," or shall make a side trip into Scott's "Quentin Durward" because the sinister Louis XI of that tale was Richard's contemporary and, next to Richard, if not the strongest certainly the most astute man of the age—will prove the validity of Arnold Bennett's suggestion.

That suggestion gives rise to a similar thought of wider application—the thought of the delightful interrelation our young reader may establish between arts that are highly to refresh his soul and expand his culture.

To establish that interrelation he will call in the art and annals of the stage to illumine poetic drama. Doing that he will discover that David Garrick, Edmund Kean, Edwin Forrest, the two Booths, Henry Irving, and Richard Mansfield were not only great actors but also great poets and commentators.

Footing it northward thirty years ago from the town of Hinckley on the southwestern border of Leicestershire, I paused at a

farmhouse door and asked the woman standing there, "Am I on the right road to Bosworth field, ma'am?"

"I doan know the spot. Like as not you'll be meaning Market Bosworth."

"No; Bosworth field, where the great battle was fought—where King Richard was killed!"

"O! 'tis King Dick's well you seek. Aye, you have the right road."

I did not feel sorry for the unschooled woman in the doorway. Her history was not out of books. It lived. Across four centuries it had come down to her—from living lip to living lip, with the wonder and the pity in it of the countryside's tradition that Richard, about to meet death, had bent and drunk from the spring that still whispers of vanished kings in that sequestered place.

Evening was drawing on when I reached the plain. In 1485 it was a silent and lonely moor. Its contours and aspect are little changed. In the sunset glow of the August day I took my stand upon the brow of the quiet eminence which overlooks the field where fell the last of the Plantagenets, the little stretch of moor and marsh from which Henry Tudor looked out upon a new land when the shock of battle had receded, and Richard lay dead by a pool, and the crown of the house of York, which they found beneath a hawthorn bush, had become the crown of the house of Tudor.

Strong figures of kings and nobles I saw in the gathering mist and heard amid the stillness the solemn drum beats of history, and now trumpets that cried to burdened men, "Onward! Onward, for the freedom of your children's children!" Other voices I heard. Other figures I saw. The voice of the supreme poet; the figures of his deathless dreams. Amid the dusk of evening the children of poetry trooped across the plain—those servitors at the festal altars of poetic interpretation whom we call actors. I saw the ashen countenance of Shakespeare's guilty-dreaming king and heard him cry from yonder thicket where hung the purple curtains of his tent:

"Give me another horse! bind up my wounds!
Have mercy, Jesu! Soft! I did but dream."

I heard the beating of the armorers' hammers, the neighing of war horses, the drowsy sighs of men who were to die upon the morrow.

In the opposite camp lights flashed and sentinels called. Then silence and darkness, and the murmur of a prayer. I heard the voice of the Tudor prince in the majestic petition he utters as he kneels before his sword, struck upright into the ground:

"O! Thou, whose captain I account myself,
Look on my forces with a gracious eye;
Put in their hands Thy bruising irons of wrath.
. . . . . .
To Thee I do commend my watchful soul,
Ere I let fall the windows of mine eyes:
Sleeping and waking, O! defend me still."

Close, close crowd the shadows of the players—only shadows, yet more vivid than the warriors who marched upon that field—the long, resplendent line of Richards, the men who have vitalized this rôle as only the touch of their high dowered genius could vitalize and who by their living touch made the pageantry of time long gone again to move, again to thrill.

Such heroic scenes from the struggle and the aspiration of mankind the drama and the player's art reanimate for us once more, and I knew in that crowded hour that it was so. The gracious knowledge had done for me high service. It had made the moorland and the August sunset a place and time of epic. It had enriched existence.

## XLIII

## MONTAIGNE'S ESSAYS

(First published, in part, in 1580)

### *THE MOST CELEBRATED TRIBUTE TO MONTAIGNE AND HIS BOOK*

*There have been men with deeper insight; but, one would say, never a man with such abundance of thoughts: he is never dull, never insincere, and has the genius to make the reader care for all that he cares for.*

*The sincerity and marrow of the man reaches to his sentences. I know not anywhere the book that seems less written. It is the language of conversation transferred to a book. Cut these words, and they would bleed; they are vascular and alive. . . .*

*This book of Montaigne the world has endorsed by translating it into all tongues and printing seventy-five editions of it in Europe; and that, too, a circulation somewhat chosen—namely among courtiers, soldiers, princes, men of the world and men of wit and generosity.*

("Representative Men," 1850.) RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

"I LIKE your book, monseigneur," said Henri III of France to Michel Eyquem, lord of Montaigne.

"Then, sire," replied the Gascon gentleman—for like d'Artagnan he was a Gascon and garrulous—"then you must needs like me, for my book is myself."

The monarch who reigned in France during fifteen of the one and twenty years in which Montaigne was composing and elaborating his "Essays" and sending them through three or four editions, was a murderous wretch, but as a critic he was competent. Half Medici, the grandson of Lorenzo the Magnificent knew a work of art when he saw it, and for nearly three centuries and a half the world of all the languages of civilized men has steadfastly been confirming the royal verdict on Montaigne's essays. It "likes" monseigneur's book.

"Like" is the word. The world thoroughly *likes* this big, wise, hearty, human, rambling, intimate, honest, savory book—likes it

as it likes an old shoe or an old friend. The old shoe is comfortable; the old friend is casual: Montaigne is both. Like the old friend, he has perpetual license to utter whatever is on his mind at the moment—whatever, as the saying is, pops into his head. Never abusing the privilege—sure token of the judicious friend—he still seems ever to be using it.

After ten generations of mankind—the chronologists count a generation as thirty-three years—have thumbed him over, tossed him aside, taken him up again, and treasured and copied and stolen his sententious utterances—now in this 1927, three hundred and forty-three years after the first edition of the book which anxious, treacherous, menaced Henry of Valois found solace in—here is an eleventh generation wishing that Michael of Montaigne had taken even more advantage of an old friend's privilege: Privilege to confide, to counsel, to fret, to wonder, to put this and that together, to be sorry for himself, to be sorry for us, to wag his head, to chat on and on at his leisure, and with the last of nearly half a million words to say—"Well, now I must be going!" And go he does with pleasant words on his kind lips—words which come in the last of the seven and eighty essays he wrote, the essay called "Experience." He is drawing near to sixty and says that he feels his years. But he does not complain. Life still is interesting, and he very interesting to himself. He is standing at the door of farewell. For 2,400 comfortable little pages he and we have been friends.

"It is an absolute perfection," he is saying:

" . . . it is an absolute perfection, and, as it were divine, for a man to know how to enjoy his being loyally. We seek for other conditions because we understand not the use of ours: and go out of ourselves, forsomuch as we know not what abiding there is. . . . Be we upon stilts, yet must we go with our own legs. And sit we upon the highest throne of the world, yet sit we upon our own tail. The best and most commendable lives, and best pleasing me are (in my conceit) those which with order are fitted, and with decorum are ranged to the common mold and human model: without wonder or extravagancy. Now hath old age need to be handled more tenderly. Let us recommend it unto that god who is the protector of health and fountain of all wisdom, but blithe and social."

He is going down the hall, some words of his dear Horace on his lips—the words of the prayer to the god that is "blithe and social":

> "Apollo grant, enjoy health I may
> That I have got, and with sound mind, I pray:
> Nor that I may with shame spend my old years,
> Nor wanting music to delight mine ears."

So end the essays. Enjoy existence loyally; understanding the uses and possibilities of thine own condition, joy will come. Sit solid; monarchs can do no more, and few of them as much. Order and decorum are the harmonies of an understanding life, and there is no attaining them without study of self. Montaigne was always saying that. Much did he love Cicero, and could read him before he could read French, but:

"I had rather understand myself well in myself than in Cicero. Out of the experience I have of myself I find sufficient ground to make myself wise, were I but a good, proficient scholar. Whoever shall commit to memory the excess or inconvenience of his rage or anger past, and how far that fit transported him, may see the deformity of that passion better than in Aristotle, and conceive a more just hatred against it. . . . Cæsar's life hath no more examples for us than our own. . . . He that shall call to mind how often and how several times he hath been deceived, and misaccompted his own judgment, is he not a simple gull if he do not forever afterward distrust the same?"

To live to the purpose was the basis of his philosophy:

"What egregious fools are we! He hath passed his life in idleness, say we: 'Alas, I have done nothing this day.' What? have you not lived? It is not only the fundamental but the noblest of your occupation. 'Had I been placed or thought fit for the managing of great affairs, I would have showed what I could have performed.' Have you known how to meditate and manage your life? you have accomplished the greatest work of all. . . . Have you known how to compose your manners? you have done more than he who hath composed books. Have you known how to take rest? you have done more than he who hath taken Empires and Cities. The glorious masterpiece of man is to live to the purpose. All other things, as to reign, to govern, to hoard up treasure, to thrive and to build, are for the most part but appendixes and supports thereunto. . . ."

Again, in the essay, "On Repenting" (Book III, Chapter II)—and here you shall have Montaigne in the aspect of the English into which John Florio translated him, the English in which Shakespeare read him:

"To gaine a Battaile, perfourme an Ambassage, and governe a people, are noble and woorthy actions; to chide, laugh, sell, pay, love, hate, and mildely and justly to converse both with his owne and with himselfe; not to relent, and not gaine-say himselfe, are thinges more rare, more difficult and lesse remarkeable." [*Remarkeable* is here used in the sense of remarked, commented upon, taken account of.]

Everything about and everything in this book is universal because it is intensely intimate and particular. It is you and I. Emerson said that emphatically. He said that Montaigne and Confucius and Moses and Leibnitz are not so much individuals as "parts of man and parts of me," and in a letter to his Aunt Mary he spoke of Montaigne's book as "wild and savory as sweet fern." Not outdated, he meant, nor having merely the charm of quaintness, but having lordly comprehensiveness of all time and all men because it is so honestly and so explicitly of one time and of one man who saw life whole, and saw it true.

Lowell said he could "recall no writer more truly modern than Montaigne." In Lowell's collected works there are nearly thirty references to and comments on Montaigne; in Emerson many more. It was Emerson who in Paris, nearly a hundred years ago, came upon, in the cemetery of Père Lachaise, the tomb of Auguste Collignon, which informed the passer-by that the occupant of it "had lived to do right, and had formed himself to virtue on the Essays of Montaigne." Of virtue, Montaigne, ardent Latinist though he was, said he would have men taught to love virtue instead of "learning to decline *virtus*."

His views on education, on prohibition of torture, on all the measures that make men humane and rational, were far in advance of his time, a time which, what with Catholics and Huguenots clawing at one another, and kings and princes paying bravos and zealots to assassinate kings and princes, was bitter, turbulent and insensate. It inflicted its vicious temper even upon little children, and Montaigne exclaimed:

"What a way to awaken an appetite for their lessons, in these young and tender souls, to lead them to study with a terrible countenance and hands armed with whips."

He said he would have schoolrooms strewn with flowers and leaves rather than with "the bloody twigs of willows."

That is from the 100-page essay on the education of children (Book I, Chapter XXV) which Montaigne wrote at the request of the Lady Diana of Foix. After three and a half centuries it continues to deserve the attention of pedagogists not because all of it is now either true or workable but because the spirit of it is the spirit which leads young people to take learning unto themselves not as a taskmaster but as a lover.

The "Essays" extend from a couple of pages to more than a hundred. They are divided into three books. They became longer as the author progressed with his work—and better. Book I contains fifty-seven pieces; Book II, seventeen; Book III, thirteen. They touch upon almost every aspect of life as life is lived and as life ought to be lived.

The first essay contains ten pages and is entitled "By Diverse Means Men Come to the Same End"; the second is "Of Sadness and Sorrow," and then, for hundreds of pithy pages, papers short and long on the affections, on truth and falsity, on idleness, on liars, on ready speech, on constancy, on cowardice, on fear, on imagination, on custom, on friendship (it is among the best), on moderation, on clothes, on solitude, on Cato the Younger, on Cicero, on drunkenness, on conscience, on books—Montaigne possessed a thousand: possessed them not as property alone but as daily provender which nourished and exercised every fiber and sinew of his mind—on cruelty, on glory, on presumption, on honesty, on repentance, on vanity, on cripples, and on experience, which is the longest (146 pages) and the last.

To refresh recollection take a handful of the good things he said, or resaid more tellingly than anybody else had said them,—and here I use the translation of him by Charles Cotton, old Izaak Walton's friend and follower, instead of Florio's, because Cotton's, though less savory, is terser:

"Nothing is so firmly believed as what we least know."

"We should inquire who is wise to most purpose, not who is most wise."

"The laws of conscience, which we pretend to be derived from nature, proceed from custom."

"Man is certainly stark mad; he cannot make a worm, and yet he will be making gods by the dozen."

"I say as Epicurus said, that a man should not so much respect [consider] what he eateth as with whom he eateth."

"It is not without good reason said, that he who has not a good memory should never take upon him the trade of lying."

"It seems to me that the nursing mother of most false opinions, both public and private, is the too high opinion which man has of himself."

"Obstinacy and heat of opinion are the surest proof of stupidity. Is there anything so assured, resolved, disdainful, contemplative, solemn, and serious as the ass?"

"There's more ado to interpret interpretations than to interpret things: and more books upon books than upon any other subject. All swarmeth with commentaries: Of Authors there is great penury. Our opinions are grafted one upon another."

It has been said that not alone everything in but also everything about this book is intimate and particular. We know where and when and how Montaigne wrote it. We know the third floor tower room of the château of Montaigne, a few miles east of Bordeaux, to the last detail of the arrangement of the bookshelves and the inscriptions on the cornices. We know that the good Gascon liked to sit or lie as Lincoln liked to—"I have ever loved to repose myself, whether sitting or lying, with my heels as high, or higher, than my head": Essay on Experience—and we know that he loved cats and would not sit down to write without his favorite by his side. With the endearing picture of him—playing with the cat between whiles of composition, and of cogitation on the enigma of what the favorite's cogitations were the while—I leave you alone with Montaigne and his book, the friendly, sagacious Montaigne who reconciles us to life as it is because, says he, it is so interesting and so much can be made of it:

"When my Cat and I entertain each other with mutual apish tricks, as playing with a garter, who knows but that I make my Cat more sport than she makes me? Shall I conclude her to be simple, that has her time to begin or refuse to play as freely as I myself have? Nay, who knows but that it is a defect of my not understanding her language (for doubtless Cats talk and reason with one another) that we agree no better: and who knows but that she pities me for being no wiser than to play with her, and laughs and censures my folly for making sport for her when we two play together?"

## XLIV

## THACKERAY'S "THE HISTORY OF HENRY ESMOND, ESQ."

(First published in 1852)

*When I look at these faint records of gallantry and tenderness; when I contemplate the fading portraits of these beautiful girls, and think, too, that they have long since bloomed, reigned, grown old, died, and passed away, and with them all their graces, their triumphs, their rivalries, their admirers; the whole empire of love and pleasure in which they ruled—"all dead, all buried, all forgotten," I find a cloud of melancholy stealing over the present gayeties around me.*—"Bracebridge Hall," Chapter VII.

THOSE musing and harmonious lines of Irving, although they were written nearly a generation before "Henry Esmond" was published (1852) always have seemed to me to waft more persuasively to the reader of Thackeray's masterpiece the spirit and the charm of that book than do most of the words written about it.

That spirit is the spirit of wistfulness—a wistful chivalry that made a fine and reticent art of renunciation; that charm is blended of the radiance and the courtliness of an age which, whatever else it had or had not, had distinction—distinction in war, in letters, and in conduct. It was facile, graceful, suave, artificial, elegant. 'Tis a vanished charm, never to be recovered nor, were it recovered, useful any more.

Until Mr. Thackeray wrote "Henry Esmond" it never was recovered, and then only within the compass of a single tale and by a marvelous tour de force of a man of genius.

I love to write about this book. It has been selected for this series of little papers not so much because it is representative of Thackeray as because it is representative of perfection. It is not like the Thackeray of any other book by Thackeray, nor like the book of any other artificer in English prose-poetry. It is in a class

by itself; it is sheer beauty, and to write of sheer beauty is to stand in the peril of writing extravagantly. But who may not write extravagantly, if write he must, of his love affairs? And "Esmond" for seventy years has been the love of persons who love letters. A boy reads it for the campaigns, the duels, the conspiracies, the projected flight of Beatrix and the Pretender, and for that exquisite scene at the dinner table of Prince Eugene in Lille, where after the battle of Wynendael the outraged General Webb, piercing the false Gazette with the point of his sword, passes it across the table to falser Marlborough and says, "Permit me to hand it to your grace!"

The young man reads it for the lovely tenderness that envelops the tale like a melodious sighing from the first scene in the great "Book-Room or Yellow Gallery," where little Harry, "looking up in a sort of delight and wonder" at Rachel Castlewood, says, "My name is Henry Esmond," to those last lines where Harry, old retired colonel and Virginia planter now, writes finis to the story of his life. The brave tale ends in sweet diminuendo. It hath a dying fall—gentle, serene, reconciled.

Hear its music:

"In our Transatlantick country we have a season, the calmest and most delightful of the year, which we call the Indian summer: I often say the autumn of our life resembles that happy and serene weather: and am thankful for its rest and its sweet sunshine. Heaven hath blessed us with a child, which each parent loves for her resemblance to the other. Our diamonds are turned into ploughs and axes for our plantations; and into negroes, the happiest and merriest, I think, in all this country: and the only jewel by which my wife sets any store, and from which she hath never parted, is that gold button she took from my arm on the day when she visited me in prison, and which she wore ever after, as she told me, on the tenderest heart in the world."

And the man growing old—ah, with retrospect pleased and a little plaintive, he turns the familiar pages for a hundred reasons—for the spirit which sustains and ennobles the tale, the spirit of proud pardon and unquestioning renunciation; for the picture of Addison in his attic submitting the final draft of "The Campaign" to Esmond and the waiting courtier; for the glimpse of the Pre

tender—a glimpse more vivid than any to be found in a book of authentic history—among the soldiers on the banks of the Canihe; for that wonderful chapter V in Book III on the wits of the period; for the scathing studies of Marlborough, so actual and so strong that they stirred young Eyre Crowe to "perfect loathing" of the great duke when Thackeray dictated those passages to him; for the duel with the prince which all but closes the story, and for that scene, too fine and restrained for praise and too reconciled for tears, wherein the soldier Esmond, knowing what rights are his to assert if he will, makes his pilgrimage to his mother's grave in Flanders. Of all scenes in the book this is the one most quoted, the one that moves the masters of our tongue—among them so sterling a critic as the old Dr. John Brown ("Rab")—not to praise but to quiet awe when they transcribe the words:

"Esmond came to this spot in one sunny evening of spring, and saw, amidst a thousand black crosses, casting their shadows across the grassy mound, that particular one which marked his mother's resting place. . . . He fancied her in tears and darkness, kneeling at the foot of her cross, under which her cares were buried. Surely he knelt down, and said his own prayer there, not in sorrow so much as in awe (for even his memory had no recollection of her), and in pity for the pangs which the gentle soul in life had been made to suffer. To this cross she brought them; for this heavenly bridegroom she exchanged the husband who had wooed her, the traitor who had left her. A thousand such hillocks lay round about, the gentle daisies springing out of the grass over them, and each bearing its cross and requiescat. A nun, veiled in black, was kneeling hard by, at a sleeping sister's bedside (so fresh made, that the spring had scarce had time to spin a coverlid for it); beyond the cemetery walls you had glimpses of life and the world, and the spires and gables of the city. A bird came down from a roof opposite, and lit first on a cross, and then on the grass below it, whence it flew away presently with a leaf in its mouth: then came a sound as of chanting, from the chapel of the sisters hard by; others had long since filled the place which poor Mary Magdalene once had there, were kneeling at the same stall, and hearing the same hymns and prayers in which her stricken heart had found consolation. Might she sleep in peace—might she sleep in peace; and we, too, when our struggles and pains are over! But the earth is the Lord's as the heaven is; we are alike His creatures, here and yonder. I took a little flower off the hillock and kissed it, and went my way, like the bird that had just lighted on the cross by me, back into the world again. Silent recepta-

cle of death; tranquil depth of calm, out of reach of tempest and trouble! I felt as one who had been walking below the sea, and treading amidst the bones of shipwrecks."

For such reasons the ageing man turns his "Esmond"; for its beauty; for its memories, so haunting, so fragrant. Delightful book! that so entrances and envelops a boy; so quiets and comforts him who is beginning to look back, to muse, to wonder a little what the small pageantry and bustle of his own faring along busy ways have meant. That question came to Colonel Esmond—was never long out of his mind in truth—and on the day that a great love shone upon his life and, as events proved at last, made it meaningful forever, he found the answer:

"As he had sometimes felt, gazing up from the deck at midnight into the boundless starlit depths overhead, in a rapture of devout wonder at that endless brightness and beauty—in some such a way now, the depth of this pure devotion (which was, for the first time, revealed to him quite) smote upon him, and filled his heart with thanksgiving. Gracious God, who was he, weak and friendless creature, that such a love should be poured out upon him? Not in vain, not in vain has he lived—hard and thankless should he be to think so—that has such a treasure given him. What is ambition compared to that but selfish vanity? To be rich, to be famous? What do these profit a year hence, when other names sound louder than yours, when you lie hidden away under ground, along with the idle titles engraven on your coffin? But only true love lives after you—follows your memory with secret blessings—or precedes you, and intercedes for you. Non omnis moriar—if dying, I yet live in a tender heart or two; nor am lost and hopeless living, if a sainted departed soul still loves and prays for me."

Thackeray, not an o'erconfident man, not obstreperous and vain like Dickens, none the less knew his work on "Esmond" was good work. He called it "the very best I can do," and as "Barry Lyndon," "Vanity Fair," and "Pendennis" had preceded it, he knew that his "very best" was as great as it was good. He used whimsically to say that he would "leave it as his card for posterity."

It is amusing and curious to see how critics wishful to be cautious, to be judicious, ever end by capitulating to "Esmond." The manner of the good critic, William Brownell's capitulation is ingenious. "Esmond," he said, "is not the greatest of the novels

[of Thackeray]; it is the most perfect." Crusty Trollope surrendered, too, saying that for many a comfortable year he had rested placid in the conviction that Miss Austen's "Pride and Prejudice" was "the best novel in the English language *until 'Esmond' appeared.*" Trollope lived precisely thirty years after "Esmond," but he never changed his mind again on that question.

Once Trollope told Thackeray that the book "was not only his best work, but so much the best that there was none second to it." Thackeray was moody that day, and replied, "That is what I intended, but I have failed. Nobody reads it. After all, what does it matter? If they read anything one ought to be satisfied. After all, Esmond was a prig." He laughed and changed the subject.

In a way Taine, as acute as he was sympathetic to the significance of our literature, agreed with Thackeray, for he said, "Thackeray has not written a less popular nor a more beautiful story." Taine loved it much and brought his fond survey of the book to a close with the words, "We deplore that satire has robbed art of such a talent."

The firm texture of the work, the harmony of the fabric of narrative and of characterization, deeply appealed to the born artist in Taine, and he said of Thackeray's triumph in the presentation of characters real and imagined:

"He depicts their habits, household converse, like Walter Scott himself; and, what Walter Scott could not do, he imitates their style so that we are deceived by it; and many of their authentic phrases, interwoven with the text, cannot be distinguished from it."

It is this technical wizardry, these marvels of consistency, which give special point to the classical motto which Thackeray, following the custom of Esmond's time, selected for his book. That motto comprises two lines (126-127) from the "De Arte Poetica" of Horace:

> " . . . Servetur ad imum,
> Qualis ab incepto processerit, et sibi constet." *

For five years an American reviewer, Miss Fanny Butcher, has each week asked literary notables in England and America this

* "To the last let the character described continue as it began, and let it be consistent with itself."

question: "What book would you rather have written than any other book in the world?" Three artists in words so different as James Branch Cabell, Dr. Henry van Dyke and Hendrik Willem van Loon have answered "Henry Esmond." That is the tribute of good craftsmen to the master craftsman.

Two marvels distinguish "Esmond" as a specimen of technique. In the first place, it was dictated—most of it—to Mr. Crowe, who wrote entertaining pages about the experience ("With Thackeray in America"). A bit of him you must have here, for his book is not easily obtainable:

"I sat down and wrote to dictation the scathing sentences about the great Marlborough, the denouncing of Cadogan, etc., etc. As a curious instance of literary contagion, it may be here stated that I got quite bitten with the expressed anger at their misdeeds against General Webb, Thackeray's kinsman and ancestor; and that I then looked upon Secretary Cardonnel's conduct with perfect loathing. I was quite delighted to find his meannesses justly pilloried in 'Esmond's' pages.

"It was not without peculiar piquancy that this was done upon the site of old Montague House and its gardens [site of the present British Museum], famous in those Queen Anne days; as 'Prue,' Steele's wife, exclaimed: 'This is where you wretches go and fight duels.' To save ears polite, the irascible expletive applied to Cardonnel, printed in full in the first edition, was mitigated to the more presentable 'd—d' form in after-issues."

Another distinction of the first edition—dropped from subsequent editions—was the use of the long s of the Queen Anne printers.

Some of the dictation was given in the British Museum and some at the Athenæum club "where," says Mr. Crowe:

"the same method of dictation was pursued in one of the side rooms off the large library. I do not recollect that these utterances, not at all delivered sotto voce, disturbed the equanimity of either church, law, or science dignitaries frequenting that luxuriously seated library."

Dictated!

Try to conceive of the copious mind and ready tongue which could dictate those stately sentences, fashioned after the best models of the Augustan age of English letters—Addison, Steele,

Swift, Lord Bolingbroke—all of whom appear in the tale—which could at the same time firmly direct the ceaseless flow of historical allusion, delicate fancy, plaintive meditation, full-bodied adventure, description of the rarest, and which could compass the embodiment of a vanished age and make that embodiment more telling and authentic than Bishop Burnet's or Lord Macaulay's or Lord Mahon's or John Hill Burton's or Lecky's formal histories of the times of Marlborough and of Anne.

This gripping of a period distant a century and a half from his own is the second marvel of Thackeray's book. It cost him great toil. While the work was under way he wrote to his mother:

"It takes as much trouble as Macaulay's History almost, and he has the vast advantage of remembering everything he has read, whilst everything but impressions—I mean facts, dates, and so forth—slip out of my head, in which there's some great faculty lacking, depend upon it."

And again:

"I have been living in the last century for weeks past, in the day, that is; going at night as usual into the present age, until I get to fancy myself almost as familiar with one as with the other, and Oxford and Bolingbroke interest me as much as Russell and Palmerston—more, very likely. The present politics are behind the world, and not fit for the intelligence of the nation."

That substantiality, coupled with the alluringness, makes "Esmond" a goodly book to put in the hands of a boy who has sense and imagination. It will lure him on and on and back and back—on to Thackeray's "The Virginians" to see what happens to Colonel Esmond's first love, Beatrix, and his daughter, Rachel, and his grandsons; on to Scott's "Waverley" to see what happens to the Old Pretender's son, the Young Pretender, and still on to "Pendennis" to meet the George Warrington who is Colonel Henry Esmond's great-great-grandson, and back to the *Spectator* to get further pleasant pictures of the colonel's times, and into Macaulay for glowing studies of Marlborough, and perhaps into Captain Atkinson's book, "Marlborough and the Rise of the British Army," and into John Hill Burton's thoroughly readable "History

of the Reign of Queen Anne," and into Defoe and Sterne and Swift and Smollett and Fielding for more stories and studies of the opulent, active, colorful England of Anne and the first two Georges—and going that far in good literature your boy, I think, will be safe, and a lover of good literature all his days.

## XLV

## THOREAU'S "WALDEN"

(First published in 1854)

*Tell Shakespeare to attend some leisure hour,*
*For now I've business with this drop of dew.*
HENRY DAVID THOREAU.

"WALDEN"! When the lover of that book writes its title he would like to make the word a joyful shout, a kind of hail to good people who know not the book.

Of Thoreau's masterpiece two wonderful things are true—

No man having attentively read it is ever the same man again.

Second—

Nobody ever wrote a book in our tongue like it—not even Thoreau, although his "Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers" is highly authentic Thoreau.

Nobody ever wrote another book like "Walden" because, I suppose, there never was another man like Thoreau, though many a man earnestly has wished to be like him—perhaps *was* like him, but lacked the Concord surveyor's sinewy genius for getting himself expressed.

Never another book like "Walden"—"Walden" the unique!—is not that a dazzling isolation amid the authentic treasures of a literature which, if you date its beginnings from Chaucer, has meant six centuries of resplendent pageantry?

Emerson knew the manner of man he had been talking and walking with, and giving odd jobs of gardening to, during the twenty-five years of their adult companionship in Concord, and he wrote when Thoreau died, "The country knows not yet, or in the least part, how great a son it has lost."

The country knows now. Other countries also. Paris in the autumn of 1920 was reading a new translation of "Walden," and the reviews were weighty. Nine years ago there was published in

England and America a small but important volume of specimens of the significant sociological literature of the last three-quarters of a century. The essays were grouped under the title "Man or the State." Thoreau, who carried 706 unsold copies of the first edition of a thousand copies of "A Week on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers" up the attic stairs seventy-five years ago, is with the immortals in that book—with Prince Kropotkin, Buckle, Emerson, Spencer, and Tolstoy.

I know no picture in the annals of letters more touching than the picture of the grim young man carrying up the stairs the volumes returned to him after they had lain four years unsold on the publisher's shelves in Boston, and then making this gallant entry in his diary:

> "I have now a library of nearly 900 volumes, over 700 of which I wrote myself. Is it not well that the author should behold the fruits of his labor? Nevertheless, in spite of this result, sitting beside the inert mass of my works, I take up my pen to-night to record what thought or experience I may have had with as much satisfaction as ever. Indeed, I believe that this result is more inspiriting and better for me than if a thousand had bought my wares. It affects my privacy less and leaves me freer."

Johnson's august letter to Lord Chesterfield is not braver or prouder!

Of this book in 1920 a leading American publisher issued a new *popular* edition selling at a dollar a copy.

Aye, the world knows Emerson's man-of-all-work now. A few months ago, when I was spending happy, fruitful days in Concord, a visitor to the house of the Antiquarian society, where the Thoreau relics are, was a Japanese baron and banker on a tour of this country, and the custodian told me that the baron did not ask to be shown the way, but knew where the "Thoreau room" was, as well as much about Thoreau.

Now to take apart, and to examine with some care, the first named of the "Walden" marvels—is it true that a man is never the same again once he has, I do not mean dipped into, but eaten into Thoreau's book? Forty-seven years ago, when Robert Louis Stevenson wrote the apology for his far from felicitous essay on

Thoreau in the "Familiar Studies of Men and Books," he coupled grateful acknowledgment with the apology, saying, "I have scarce written ten sentences since I was introduced to him [Thoreau] but his influence might be somewhere detected by a close observer."

Why does "Walden" take such a hold of men as it does? Because it is such an honest book that there is no gainsaying it. When I say that a man having read it is never the same man again I do not mean that he forthwith begins living very differently. He may not—probably will not—live either by it or up to it—may think he cannot—but he will ever earnestly regret that he does not. That is at least a step in grace.

Thoreau wrote out of the riches of his actuality. He had lived, and made a success of, what he preached.

No other book is at once so universal and so searchingly personal. On the fourth page of the issue of "Walden" in the admirable 1906 twenty-volume edition of his complete works—the only edition to own—he says:

"I should not talk so much about myself if there were anybody else whom I knew as well."

And then he is off with you into two years of radiant actuality by the pond side a mile and a half south of Concord—the place which he loved above any other spot he ever had seen and of which he said, "One proposes that it be called 'God's Drop.'" And again, "White pond and Walden are great crystals on the surface of the earth, Lakes of Light."

What did Thoreau learn there in those two years from 1845 to 1847? Briefly, that the less a man had the more he would enjoy. He went there, and he worked there, to possess life, not things. He went there not to *reduce* life to its essentials but to *elevate* it to them. He went as no misanthrope, anchorite, cynic, or recluse, as no "skulker," as Stevenson ignobly called him. Many persons who never have felt the elevated curiosity to look into "Walden"—either the book or the lake—but only a trifling curiosity about a man who was and did "something queer" ask, "Why did Thoreau go to Walden?" That question he accounted fair and answered in a score of places in the book. On the twenty-first page of the edition already mentioned, for example:

"My purpose in going to Walden Pond was not to live cheaply nor to live dearly there, but to transact some private business with the fewest obstacles; to be hindered from accomplishing which for want of a little common sense, a little enterprise and business talent, appeared not so sad as foolish."

Another time, explicitly and with forthright kindliness, he gave the reason of it all to honest John Field, overworked, overfed, disheartened Irish day laborer, during the hour he sought shelter from the storm in John's squalid cabin. The whole passage is a gem of Dutch painting. Here are the essentials of the doctrinal part of it ("Walden," Chap. X):

"I tried to help him with my experience . . . that I did not use tea, nor coffee, nor butter, nor milk, nor fresh meat, and so did not have to work to get them; again, as I did not work hard, I did not have to eat hard, and it cost me but a trifle for my food; but as he began with tea, and coffee, and butter, and milk, and beef, he had to work hard to pay for them, and when he had worked hard he had to eat hard again to repair the waste of his system—and so it was as broad as it was long, indeed it was broader than it was long, for he was discontented and wasted his life into the bargain. . . . John heaved a sigh at this, and his wife stared with arms akimbo."

At Walden Thoreau lived happily, peacefully, cheaply and fruitfully, writing much and thinking more. The most finely attuned minds of that day in his neighborhood—and that then meant the most finely attuned in America—came to his cabin door and sat with him as long as he would let them—Hawthorne, then forty-one years old; Emerson, forty-two; Bronson Alcott (Louisa's father), forty-six, and William Ellery Channing (the rare poet), twenty-seven, whom Thoreau thought "one of the few who understood the art of taking walks." Thoreau was twenty-eight, but they all learned much from him, and, all surviving him, treasured the memory of him to their last days. In especial Emerson's essay on him is valuable, and a book to be read along with "Walden" is Channing's "Thoreau, the Poet-Naturalist."

Believe not John Macy when he calls Channing's book "fatuous." It is a loving, in-looking book of commentary, worthy of the man and the books that prompted it and written by a shining member of a family in which for more than a century genius has been

a kind of entail, and is now, as you shall know when you open each new volume of the present Channing's monumental "History of the United States" now approaching completion.

As a book of instruction and admonition "Walden" is as shrewd as Franklin. Almost any dozen sentences from it make that clear. Its charm is as readily conveyed. In no other book of prose have I encountered so much sense (horse sense, Yankee shrewdness, mother wit, men variously call it) coupled with such sheer beauty.

Take this handful of his nosegays:

"A lake is the landscape's most beautiful and expressive feature. It is earth's eye."

Of chickadees that came with—

"Faint, flitting, lisping notes, like the tinkling of icicles in the grass.

"I also heard the whooping of the ice in the pond, my great bed fellow in that part of Concord, as if it were restless in its bed and would fain turn over."

In a time of drought he spoke of "the dry and tearless grass," and once he said that the color of the bluebird seemed as if he "carried the sky on his back." The snow buntings he called "winged snowballs," and he described a pure white gull as "a wave of foam in the air." Storms he loved, saying, "We are rained and snowed on with gems," and added that there was "nothing handsomer than a snowflake and a dewdrop."

These three are from the published Journals of Thoreau, and they are representative of scores upon scores of equal beauties in volumes too little explored by the general reader:

"I cannot lean so hard on any arm as on a sunbeam.

"This lament for a golden age is only a lament for golden men.

"I have been popping corn to-night, which is only a more rapid blossoming of the seed under a greater than July heat."

In Concord—even in the self-searching, self-exacting Concord of the mid-nineteenth century—he heard, as you hear everywhere every day, lightly murderous chatter about "killing time."

His comment descends on heedless minds like the solemn in-

toning of bells in a clock tower grown weary and mournful with its long vigil over the frivolous generality of mankind:

"As if you could kill time without injuring eternity."

As challenge to a public opinion which he thought intolerable because it tolerated human slavery he could, and did, go to jail, but he was not oblivious of the fact that his own opinion might upon occasion prove the least tolerable of tyrants to him. So in "Walden"—and here is the Franklin in him—he set this down:

"Public opinion is a weak tyrant compared with our own private opinions."

As a lover of nature his love was not the hunter's devastating passion but the pure ardor of the devotee aiming at conquest by divining the mystery. "In Walden Woods," he said, "I hunt with a glass; for a gun gives you but the body while the glass gives you the bird." Sparing the body he captured the soul.

Every true essential of existence he touched with poetry, neither loftily dismissing it nor discounting it as a drear practicality but unerringly finding the benefaction and the rapture in it.

He could write poetry about and into his woodpile.

"Every man," he says in "Walden," "looks at his woodpile with a kind of affection. I loved to have mine before my window, and the more chips the better to remind me of my pleasing work. I had an old ax which nobody claimed, with which by spells in winter days, on the sunny side of the house, I played about the stumps which I had got out of my beanfield. . . . They warmed me twice—once while I was splitting them, and again when they were on the fire. So that no fuel could give out more heat."

Thoreau made no mystery of either his hermitage or its purpose, nor of the sermon he formulated from his experiment. The congregation he sought to persuade was, like his gospel, altogether definite and specific—a congregation of poor critters not enriched but baffled by the earthiness of earth.

"I do not speak," he said, "to those who are well employed, in whatever circumstances, and they know whether they are well employed or not;—but mainly to the mass of men who are discontented, and idly complaining of the hardness of their lot or of

the times. . . . Perhaps these pages are more particularly addressed to poor students."

Summing up for poor students, and for inept and untutored livers of life, the results of his experimentation at Walden, and thereabouts, he says:

"For more than five years I maintained myself by the labor of my hands, and I found that, by working about six weeks in a year, I could meet all the expenses of living. The whole of my winters, as well as most of my summers, I had free and clear for study."

Was the sole result of his system the acquirement for himself of a lofty and untroubled leisure? It was not. The final result was twenty volumes, averaging nearly 400 pages each, which the world still is reading. He wrote them in the course of about fifteen years of a life whose total came to only forty-four years. That is not "skulking."

Your own random pencilings on almost any score of "Walden's" pages will inform you as to how he made his system work. Here are random pencilings I could not resist making, albeit pencilings are an indulgence that spoil a volume for any other reader than its owner:

"A lady once offered me a mat, but as I had no room to spare within the house, nor time to spare within or without to shake it, I declined it, preferring to wipe my feet on the sod before my door. It is best to avoid the beginnings of evil."

Again:

"Furniture! Thank God, I can sit and stand without the aid of a furniture warehouse."

And yet again:

"How many a poor immortal soul have I met well nigh crushed and smothered under its load, creeping down the road of life, pushing before it a barn seventy-five feet by forty."

"I am for economy," said Mr. Coolidge in his inaugural of 1925, "not because it saves money but because it saves people." The sentence is pure Thoreau.

For always Thoreau was a miser in the expenditure of his soul on those punishing superfluities of existence which most men

think of as its necessaries. But he made a fortune in its sublimities and left his property unencumbered to posterity.

"I have traveled," he said, "a good deal in Concord; and everywhere, in shops and offices and fields, the inhabitants have appeared to me to be doing penance in a thousand remarkable ways. . . . The twelve labors of Hercules were trifling in comparison with those which my neighbors have undertaken; for they were only twelve, and had an end; but I could never see that these men slew or captured any monster or finished any labor."

The deprivations incident to his method of ordering existence Thoreau accounted its rewards, and if we assemble three detached passages of "Walden," we shall find that he balanced his books thus:

"At the present day [1847], and in this country, as I find by my own experience, a few implements, a knife, an axe, a spade, a wheelbarrow, etc., and for the studious, lamplight, stationery, and access to a few books, rank next to necessaries and can all be obtained at a trifling cost." [You will say, reader, that the times and the country have changed. They have. But the fact remains that the shores of Walden pond, whereon the great experiment was made, are still unpeopled. What was done there can, given your man, still be done there.]

"It appears from the above estimate [an estimate to be found on the sixty-seventh page of the volume of 'Walden' which is part of the 1906 edition of his works] that my food alone cost me in money about twenty-seven cents a week. It was rye and Indian meal without yeast, potatoes, rice, a very little salt pork, molasses, and salt; and my drink, water.

"I am convinced that if all men were to live as simply as I did, thieving and robbery would be unknown."

Those are three key passages of "Walden."

The third, William Dean Howells brushed contemptuously away, saying *:

"Men are not going to answer the riddle of the painful earth by building themselves shanties, and living upon beans, and watching ant fights."

That is pungent.

But somehow I seem to see young Henry David Thoreau lifting

* "Literary Friends and Acquaintance."

his grave, clear, untroubled eyes and answering, as answer he does, in "Walden":

"If you have built castles in the air, your work need not be lost; that is where they should be. Now put the foundations under them.

"All men want, not something to *do with,* but something to *do,* or rather something to *be.*"

This holy hermit who could bear to be alone, this practical contriver who mingled with some of the best minds of his age, called the morning "the spring of the day," and the spring "the morning of the year," and his life was ever morning and ever spring. He said that he never got over his surprise that he should have been born into "the most estimable place in all the world, and in the very nick of time, too." He lived his own life, and intruded upon no other man's; thought his own thoughts, nor intruded them, either—well content if he had thought out a thing truly. He was pleased by the comment of the Cape Cod fisherman, who, taking him for a peddler said, "It makes no difference what you carry so long as you carry truth with you." He was not bent on propaganda, and thus royally dismissed persons who showed symptoms of becoming his "followers":

"One young man of my acquaintance, who has inherited some acres, told me that he thought he should live as I did, *if he had the means.* I would not have any one adopt *my* mode of living on any account; for, beside that before he has fairly learned it I may have found out another for myself, I desire that there may be as many different persons in the world as possible."

Thoreau died untimely from exposure while counting the rings of a tree amid December snow, but he died at peace. One of those bedside comforters who add a new terror to death asked, "Henry, have you made your peace with God?" The friend of birds and field mice and all helpless beings, the lover of truth to the ultimate, smiled and answered, "I have never quarreled with him."

He is the bonniest, gravest, honestest spirit in our literature, and his great book has the sunshine, the crisp snow, the bird notes, the morning light and the morning fragrance of Walden pond bound in with every one of its nearly 400 steadying, exhilarating, comforting pages. It lives and sings.

## XLVI

## THE "RUBÁIYÁT" OF OMAR KHÁYYÁM

(Composed in the eleventh century; first edition of FitzGerald's translation published in 1859)

*Sultan and slave alike have gone their way*
*With Bahram Gur, but whither none may say.*
*Yet he who charmed the wise at Náishapúr*
*Seven centuries since, still charms the wise to-day.*

THOMAS BAILEY ALDRICH.

*Probably the most beautiful and stately presentation of Agnosticism ever made; with its resultant Epicureanism.*

("Life of Edward FitzGerald.") A. C. BENSON.

*It [FitzGerald's translation of the "Rubáiyát"] is the work of a poet inspired by a poet; not a copy, but a reproduction; not a translation, but a redelivery of a poetic inspiration.*

(*North American Review*, October, 1869.)

CHARLES ELIOT NORTON.

"No doubt about this being a best seller of the ages," you will say as you exhibit your tiny waistcoat pocket copy of the "Rubáiyát" from Mr. Mosher's press or your sumptuous Elihu Vedder edition from the Houghton-Mifflin press.

But there once was doubt, and on that doubt, which slowly vanished behind rosy clouds of best sellership, hangs one of the strangest tales in literary history, ancient or modern. Old Omar Kháyyám, who was about forty-eight years old when William the Norman was fighting the Battle of Hastings and who lived to the age of 105, had been 767 years in his rose-strewn grave when his "Rubáiyát" began to be a best seller, and Edward FitzGerald—"Old Fitz," as

CARPE DIEM

*Come, fill the Cup, and in the fire of Spring*
*Your Winter-garment of Repentance fling:*
*The Bird of Time has but a little way*
*To flutter—and the Bird is on the Wing.*

*Whether at Náishapúr or Babylon,*
*Whether the Cup with sweet or bitter run,*
*The Wine of Life keeps oozing drop by drop,*
*The leaves of Life keep falling one by one.*

*Each Morn a thousand Roses brings, you say;*
*Yes, but where leaves the Rose of Yesterday?*
*And this first Summer month that brings the Rose*
*Shall take Jamshyd and Kaikobád away.*

*Well, let it take them! What have we to do*
*With Kaikobád the Great, or Kaikhosrú*
*Let Zál and Rustum thunder as they will,*
*Or Hátim call to Supper—heed not you.*
(Quatrains 7, 8, 9, 10.)

Tennyson used to call him—the Irishman who occidentalized the Persian, had been seven years in his. In other words, it was about 1890 that the tremendous vogue of these 101 four-liners — and four-liners, or quatrains, is all that the Arabic plural noun rubáiyát means—began, although FitzGerald's version of 101 of the choicest of Omar's 1,200 quatrains had then been thirty-one years before the English reading public.

Charles Eliot Norton, Harvard pundit on art and Dante, was the first to exploit old Omar and old Fitz in our country. That service Professor Norton performed in 1869 in an essay he wrote for the *North American Review*, when he described FitzGerald's triumph as "not a translation but a redelivery of a poetic inspiration."

The fact that the triumph was FitzGerald's was unknown to Professor Norton, for the translation had appeared anonymously and in a most inconspicuous manner.

No vogue was created by the Norton essay of 1869, and one spring day nearly four years later, when the professor was walking with Carlyle in London, he told him how much he admired "the little book." Carlyle said he had never heard of it; wanted to know whose work it was.

Come, Let Us Drink

*Ah, my Belovèd, fill the Cup that clears*
*To-day of past Regret and future Fears:*
*To-morrow! Why, To-morrow I may be*
*Myself with Yesterday's Sev'n thousand Years.*

*For some we loved, the loveliest and the best*
*That from his Vintage rolling Time has prest,*
*Have drunk their Cup a Round or two before,*
*And one by one crept silently to rest.*
(Quatrains 21, 22.)

"I learn from Lady Burne-Jones," Prof. Norton replied, "that the translator is a Rev. Edward FitzGerald, who lives somewhere in Norfolk and spends much time in his boat."

"The Rev. Edward FitzGerald?" stormed Carlyle. "Why, he's no more reverend than I am! He's a very old friend of mine. I'm surprised, if the book be as good as you tell me it is, that my old friend has never mentioned it to me." Prof. Norton sent him the "Rubáiyát" next day, and met him again two or three days later, when Carlyle burst forth with: "I've read that little book which you sent to me, and I think my old friend FitzGerald might have spent his time to much better purpose than in busying himself with the verses of that old Mohammedan blackguard. It is worse than a mere waste of labor."

Sic Transit

*Think, in this batter'd Caravanserai*
*Whose Portals are alternate Night and Day,*
*How Sultán after Sultán with his Pomp*
*Abode his destin'd Hour, and went his way.*

*They say the Lion and the Lizard keep*
*The Courts where Jamshyd gloried and drank deep:*
*And Bahrám, that great Hunter—the Wild Ass*
*Stamps o'er his Head, but cannot break his Sleep.*

*I sometimes think that never blows so red*
*The Rose as where some buried Cæsar bled;*
*That every Hyacinth the Garden wears*
*Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head.*

*And this reviving Herb whose tender Green*
*Fledges the River-Lip on which we lean—*
*Ah, lean upon it lightly! for who knows*
*From what once lovely Lip it springs unseen!*

(Quatrains 17, 18, 19, 20.)

Add to this, that a year before FitzGerald issued his translation in pamphlet form, Fraser's magazine had declined to print the verses, and that the pamphlets, issued at five shillings each, soon fell to a penny and finally were tossed into a box outside Quaritch's shop in St. Martins Lane, and you have two more striking facts in the early history of what was to become a best seller of the ages. In that box Swinburne and Rossetti found some of the pamphlets and acclaimed the translation to their friends. In a week or two the price went up to a guinea a pamphlet, but the world-vogue of "the little book" was nevertheless to hang fire for many a year. Nor is that the strangest part of this tale of a best seller of the ages.

For this book about wine and love and roses and tears had as its original composer an astronomer, mathematician and calendar-reformer, and as its transmitter to continents of which Omar did not know the existence, an early Victorian who was a recluse, who so seldom read newspapers that his friends used to take care to write him specially when one of his celebrated friends died, who was, if not a misogynist, certainly no success with women, who was a vegetarian, and whose favorite motto was "Plain Living and High Thinking." One time in the little Norfolk town of Woodbridge, where he passed many years of his later life, he stopped in the street to chat with a pretty young lady. At parting he said, "I hope you will always speak to me when we meet. I never recognize ladies—their bonnets are so much alike."

DUST AND ASHES

*Why, all the Saints and Sages who discuss'd*
*Of the Two Worlds so learnedly are thrust*
*Like foolish Prophets forth; their Words to Scorn*
*Are scatter'd, and their Mouths are stopt with Dust.*

*Myself when young did eagerly frequent*
*Doctor and Saint, and heard great argument*
*About it and about: but evermore*
*Came out by the same door where in I went.*
(Quatrains 26, 27.)

"You should look a little lower than the bonnet, sir," said the pretty young lady.

"So I will! So I will!" said "Old Fitz," as one who had come into the glad dawn of a new idea, and went his way—"the odd, tall, sad-faced man in an ill-fitting suit, with a shabby hat pushed back on his head, and blue spectacles on his nose," as Sir Sidney Colvin described him in his delightful "Memories and Notes of Persons and Places."

The Omar-FitzGerald "Rubáiyát" was one of six forever memorable books of the year 1859. The other five were: Tennyson's "Idylls of the King," George Eliot's "Adam Bede," Dickens' "Tale of Two Cities," Meredith's "Richard Feverel," and Darwin's "Origin of Species."

Now, why are Omar the Tentmaker (and, by the way, be not too ready to accept the statement of some scholars that kháyyám, meaning tentmaker, was a name he adopted from his family's

trade, for there are other scholars as sound who say that it refers only to the tents of thought and fancy the poet wove), why, then, are Omar and Edward inseparably linked in the annals of letters? For they are so linked—not Beaumont and Fletcher or Boswell and Johnson or Erckmann-Chatrian, or Besant and Rice more inseparably. It is because by the high alchemy of genius the English poet refined a diffuse, repetitious, and sometimes gross Oriental composition into pure gold.

Having been introduced to Omar's "Rubáiyát" in the original by E. B. Cowell, later professor of Sanskrit at Cambridge, FitzGerald worked in the Persian language and Persian poetry for years. He saturated himself with both, but when he came to the translating of Omar he also infused himself into Omar. He did not so infuse himself in his translation of the Persian Jami, with the consequence that for one who to-day knows Jami thousands know Omar. A dozen explanations of the marvel FitzGerald wrought for Omar have been given. The best is Prof. Norton's. Sir Sidney Colvin's is along the same lines, for he says the marvel was one "not of translating but of transmuting," and Mr. A. C. Benson in his admirable little life of FitzGerald puts it thus: "He concentrated the scattered rays into his burning glass. . . . It was as though he had found some strict and solemn melody of a bygone age, and enriched it with new and honeyed harmonies, added melancholy cadences and sweet interludes of sorrow."

It is because he did this, it is because he gave the ancient Oriental stanzas a grace, dignity, opulence, and tenderness which,

AND LIFE GOES ON

*And fear not lest Existence closing your*
*Account, and mine, should know the like no more;*
*The Eternal Sáki from that Bowl has pour'd*
*Millions of Bubbles like us, and will pour.*

*When You and I behind the Veil are past,*
*Oh, but the long, long while the World shall last,*
*Which of our Coming and Departure heeds*
*As the Sev'n Seas should heed a pebble-cast.*

*A Moment's Halt—a momentary taste*
*Of Being from the Well amid the Waste—*
*And Lo!—the phantom Caravan has reach'd*
*The Nothing it set out from—Oh, make haste!*
(Quatrains 46, 47, 48.)

scholars tell us, the originals possess in no such measure, that he also gave Omar a new fame—a second chance, as it were, for immortality. The result is astounding. You could print the entire FitzGerald "Rubáiyát" in three and a half columns of a newspaper, and yet in the last thirty or forty years a literature has grown up around it. Tipplers in barrooms once could maunder through it and scholars who do not tipple have written reviews and books and rhapsodies about it. About the FitzGerald version of it, I mean, for do you know how much space the original Omar and his "Rubáiyát" receive in Miss Hunt's 400 page "Persian Literature Ancient and Modern"? Five lines!—five lines to twice as many pages about the Persian poet Firdusi, who flourished in the province of Khorason where Omar dwelt and who died two years after Omar was born.

RESIGNATION

*O threats of Hell and hopes of Paradise!*
*One thing at least is certain,—This Life flies;*
*One thing is certain and the rest is Lies;*
*The Flower that once has blown forever dies.*

*Strange, is it not? that of the myriads who*
*Before us pass'd the door of Darkness through*
*Not one returns to tell us of the Road,*
*Which to discover we must travel, too.*

*The Revelations of Devout and Learn'd*
*Who rose before us, and as Prophets burn'd,*
*Are all but Stories, which, awoke from Sleep*
*They told their fellows, and to Sleep return'd.*

*I sent my Soul through the Invisible,*
*Some letter of that After-life to spell;*
*And by and by my Soul return'd to me,*
*And answer'd, "I Myself am Heav'n and Hell."*

(Quatrains 63, 64, 65, 66.)

I think I can show you at a glance what witchery there was in Edward FitzGerald's touch as translator. Ralph Waldo Emerson, no contemptible poet, once tried his hand at a version of the Omar quatrain which FitzGerald numbered XIX. This was the result:

"Each spot where tulips prank their state
Has drunk the life blood of the great;
The violets yon field which stain
Are moles of beauties Time hath slain."

Now, glance back to the third stanza in the third group of quatrains adorning this chapter. . . . You see how rapturous FitzGerald was where Emerson was routine.

## XLVII

## SWIFT'S "GULLIVER'S TRAVELS"

(First published in 1726)

*STYLE, SAID DEAN SWIFT, IS PROPER WORDS IN PROPER PLACES, AND HOW EASY OF ATTAINMENT HE HERE MAKES IT SEEM*

*War is the child of pride, and pride the daughter of riches.*

*We have just religion enough to make us hate, but not enough to make us love one another.*

*Few are qualified to shine in company; but it is in most men's power to be agreeable.*

*Method is good in all things. Order governs the world. The Devil is the author of confusion.*

*Party is the madness of many for the gain of a few.*

*Complaint is the largest tribute Heaven receives, and the sincerest part of our devotion.*

*Very few men, properly speaking, live at present, but are providing to live another time.*

*Books, the children of the brain.*

*Every man desireth to live long, but no man would be old.*

*If a man maketh me keep my distance, the comfort is he keepeth his at the same time.*

*I mean you lie—under a mistake.*

*If a man would register all his opinions upon love, politics, religion, learning, etc., beginning from his youth, and so go on to old age, what a bundle of inconsistencies and contradictions would appear at last!*

JONATHAN SWIFT.

"GULLIVER'S TRAVELS" outdated?

Not so long as King Cant, most tenacious of hereditary monarchs, reigns.

Not so long as men intrusted with gravest interests of a nation

twaddle, shuffle, pretend, waste time and words, and, directly or indirectly, take money for their influence, and run private telegraph wires, laden with secret messages, from the very seats of governmental power to their loafing places and their plotting places by the sea.

Not so long as mass indifference is the securest hide-away for the plottings, thievings, and subtler corruptions effected by enemies of the state who, because they are or have been servants of the state, know the spots where the interests of the state are most vulnerable.

Not so long as commercial practices that are dubious and commercial practices that are downright swindling are winked at—are considered rather the proofs of a bright mind than of a black heart—by the public that is their victim.

Not so long as a considerable part of mankind is guilty and the larger part of it inert.

The note of Jonathan Swift's "Gulliver's Travels" is not, as many persons suppose, the note of desolate misanthropy; it is the note of "Wake up! Look sharp! Be angry!"

By that note Dean Swift drove corrupt politicians, corrupt promoters, and corrupt court-ladies of his time nearly distracted. But their distraction left them impotent.

Robert Walpole, minister of state who made his name a synonym for parliamentary corruption, once determined amid distraction to put Jonathan Swift in jail for his incessant releases of Wake up! Look sharp! Be angry!

"Have you ten thousand men to spare for the job?" asked more cautious if not shrewder men around the minister,—"for it cannot be done with less."

Another time Archbishop Boulter complained that Swift had been "fostering disaffection" in the Dublin citizenry.

"Disaffection!" shouted the Dean. "Why, if I had lifted my hand they would have torn you in a thousand pieces!"

In an age of great writers he wielded in the heyday of his power more direct power on more people than was wielded by all the other great writers of that age.

In the little forty-page life of Swift in his "Lives of the English

Poets," Samuel Johnson said the same thing with a decisiveness that is almost affrighting to a journalist. "Swift must be allowed," he said, "for a time to have dictated the opinions of the English nation."

What was the source of that enormous power? Its source was threefold. It lay in a courage which nothing or nobody could affright; in passionate and at times almost maniacal hatred of cant and hypocrisy, and in an iron pen wielded by a pitiless hand.

You will remember that, toward the close of the sixth chapter of Part II of "Gulliver's Travels" (which is the part relating the travels and observations of Surgeon Gulliver among the Brobdingnagians), the sagacious king of the land of giants demands of the traveler a résumé of English history. It is given, and:

"He was perfectly astonished with the historical account I gave him of our affairs during the last century, protesting it was only a heap of conspiracies, rebellions, murders, massacres, revolutions, banishments, the very worst effects that avarice, faction, hypocrisy, perfidiousness, cruelty, rage, madness, hatred, envy, lust, malice, or ambition, could produce."

Every word is indispensable; every word is a bullet plus a wound. That is Swift's style; that is Swift's spirit. He meant to hit and he meant to hurt. He meant to shake men out of the canting, undiscriminating contemplation of their country's annals which in some countries is made a measure of patriotism and which in some states of our country is imposed upon adolescents by legislation.

The chapter comes to a close with these words of the shocked ruler of giant land, where Gulliver was called Grildrig:

"My little friend Grildrig, you have made a most admirable panegyric upon your country; you have clearly proved that ignorance, idleness, and vice are the proper ingredients for qualifying a legislator: that laws are best explained, interpreted, and applied by those whose interest and abilities lie in perverting, confounding, and eluding them. I observe among you some lines of an institution, which in its original might have been tolerable, but these half erased, and the rest wholly blurred and blotted by corruptions. It doth not appear from all you have said, how any one virtue is required towards the procurement of any one station among you; much less that men are ennobled on account

of their virtue, that priests are advanced for their piety or learning, soldiers for their conduct or valor, judges for their integrity, senators for the love of their country, or counsellors for their wisdom . . . But by what I have gathered from your own relation, and the answers I have with much pains wringed and extorted from you, I cannot but conclude the bulk of your natives to be the most pernicious race of little odious vermin that nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the earth."

Such words we to-day may read with equanimity. But could we if the stench of oil were in our noses? or if shattered veterans of our wars had been looted by men accounted their comrades in arms? or if the people's domains and the people's treasures had been made the quid pro quo in a traffic for the influence or the silence of statesmen and of publicists? Assuredly we could not. Besides, it is a book lacking only a few months of being two centuries old—and it is all a fable after all.

Curious book!

To children—in its expurgations and its abbreviations for the nursery and the playroom—a wonder-book and a toy; to adults a wisdom-book and a dose of anti-cant the most drastic and salutary in the literature of English satire.

It fascinates children because, when they are reading Part I of the tale—the adventures of Surgeon Gulliver, who is a giant now, in the land of the Lilliputians—their fancy is stirred and their craving for the grotesque and marvelous is gratified by bits like this:

"I had three hundred cooks to dress my victuals, in little convenient huts built about my house, where they and their families lived, and prepared me two dishes a-piece. I took up twenty waiters in my hand, and placed them on the table: an hundred more attended below on the ground, some with dishes of meat, and some with barrels of wine, and other liquors, slung on their shoulders, all which the waiters above drew up as I wanted, in a very ingenious manner, by certain cords, as we draw the bucket up a well in Europe."

The child thinks he is reading an epic of doll land.

But father and grandfather, when they come on this in the same chapter, wag their heads and read twice the sober, gnomic

lines and say to themselves, "Those little Lilliputians, they had big ideas!":

"They look upon fraud as a greater crime than theft, and therefore seldom fail to punish it with death; for they allege, that care and vigilance, with a very common understanding, may preserve a man's goods from thieves, but honesty has no fence against superior cunning; and since it is necessary that there should be a perpetual intercourse of buying and selling, and dealing upon credit, where fraud is permitted and connived at, or hath no law to punish it, the honest dealer is always undone, and the knave gets the advantage."

And again:

"In choosing persons for all employments, they have more regard to good morals than to great abilities; for, since government is necessary to mankind, they believe that the common size of human understandings is fitted to some station or other, and that Providence never intended to make the management of public affairs a mystery, to be comprehended only by a few persons of sublime genius, of which there seldom are three born in an age: but they suppose truth, justice, temperance, and the like, to be in every man's power; the practice of which virtues, assisted by experience and a good intention, would qualify any man for the service of his country, except where a course of study is required."

But the tender wisdom, the sweet reasonableness, and the gentle, vivid touch of our next specimen of Swift steal with equal pace into the hearts of both child and adult—(it is when the good king of Brobdingnag is talking on the art of government, after Gulliver has told him there were several thousand books upon that art in English):

"He confined the knowledge of governing within very narrow bounds; to common sense and reason, to justice and lenity, to the speedy determination of civil and criminal causes; with some other obvious topics, which are not worth considering. And he gave it for his opinion that whoever could make two ears of corn, or two blades of grass, to grow upon a spot of ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of mankind, and do more essential service to his country than the whole race of politicians put together."

So kindly was that king.

But strangely limited, too, for when Lemuel Gulliver offered

to give him the secret—"as a small tribute of acknowledgment in return of so many marks that I had received of his royal favour and protection"—of a powder that "would not only destroy whole ranks of an army at once, but batter the strongest walls to the ground, sink down ships, with a thousand men in each, to the bottom of the sea, . . . would tear the houses to pieces, burst and throw splinters on every side, dashing out the brains of all who came near" and "destroy the whole metropolis, if ever it should pretend to dispute his absolute commands"—*then* "the king was struck with horror," and "protested he would rather lose half his kingdom than be privy to such a secret, which he commanded me, as I valued my life, never to mention any more."

So, I fear, a childish book after all, and that king a poor, purblind creature. So shall we leave the book on the nursery table for childish hands to turn its pages and wondering eyes to gulp its words? Perhaps we would better. But stay! Suppose those children, growing up but still trustful and kind and pitying, should one day recall its high-fantastic counsels.

What sort of world—what mad sort of world—would they then build?

## XLVIII

## WHITMAN'S "LEAVES OF GRASS"

(First published in its original form in 1855; first published with its final additions and revisions in 1892, the year of Whitman's death)

*I think I could turn and live with animals, they are so placid and self-contain'd;*
*I stand and look at them long and long.*
*They do not sweat and whine about their condition;*
*They do not lie awake in the dark and weep for their sins;*
*They do not make me sick discussing their duty to God;*
*Not one is dissatisfied—not one is demented*
*With the mania of owning things;*
*Not one kneels to another, nor to his kind that lived thousands of years ago;*
*Not one is respectable or industrious over the whole earth.*

WALT WHITMAN.

CRITICISMS, studies, surveys, appreciations, depreciations, adulations, denunciations of Whitman are the liveliest reading in the literature of that kind in the last seventy years. The body of it is immense. It is distinguished by vivacity and variety; it is also disgraced by blackguardism and a measure of misstatement seeming at times so wanton that it cannot be gently dismissed as misunderstanding; it is untruth.

It ranges from the vitriolic to the suave and from the supercilious to the reverent. It now acclaims Whitman as a burly god shouting salvation from Olympus or Sinai, or other cloud-furling peak which the imagination of man has made sacrosanct, and now denounces him as of the type of bad, base, and spiritually untidy person whom the English call a mucker. It now names him with Shakespeare (vide Rossetti) and now analyzes him as an over-

sexed lunatic with a lunatic's weakness for resounding words. It is extraordinary reading—piquant and mournful, now a warning, now fraught with good instruction. After you have waded through it and around it and have been bogged in it and lured on by it, a solid fact remains beneath your feet:

The fact of **Whitman.**

The fact of the man who said in "A Backward Glance O'er Travel'd Roads," which prefaces "November Boughs":

"I felt it all as positively then in my young days [æt. 34-36] as I do now in my old ones [æt. 69]; to formulate a poem whose every thought or fact should directly or indirectly be or connive at an implicit belief in the wisdom, health, mystery, beauty of every process, every concrete object, every human or other existence, not only consider'd from the point of view of all, but of each. . . . One main genesis-motive of the 'Leaves' was my conviction (just as strong to-day as ever) that the crowning growth of the United States is to be spiritual and heroic. To help start and favor that growth—or even to call attention to it, or the need of it—is the beginning, middle and final purpose of the poems."

And, again in that credo, these two magnificent passages. Number one I call Proud Humility:

" . . . That I have not gain'd the acceptance of my own time, but have fallen back on fond dreams of the future—that from a worldly and business point of view 'Leaves of Grass' has been worse than a failure—that public criticism on the book and myself as author of it yet shows mark'd anger and contempt more than anything else—and that solely for publishing it I have been the object of two or three pretty serious special official buffetings—is all probably no more than I ought to have expected. I had my choice when I commenc'd. . . . As fulfill'd, or partially fulfill'd, the best comfort of the whole business (after a small band of the dearest friends and upholders ever vouchsafed to man or cause) is that, unstopp'd and unwarp'd by any influence outside the soul within me, I have had my say entirely my own way, and put it unerringly on record—the value thereof to be decided by time."

And number two Proud Purpose:

"I say the profoundest service that poems or any other writings can do for their reader is not merely to satisfy the intellect, or supply something polish'd and interesting, nor even to depict great passions, or

persons or events, but to fill him with vigorous and clean manliness, religiousness, and give him *good heart* as a radical possession and habit. . . . Without yielding an inch the working-man and working-woman were to be in my pages from first to last."

Another fact remaining clean and solid beneath the feet after exploration of critical bogs surrounding Whitman is the fact of the man who wrote the lines on sanity which have been placed at the head of this chapter.

The fact, also, of the man whose work many good craftsmen said was formless and shiftless, but whose rules for craftsmanship were thus austere and exacting:

"Make no quotations, and no reference to any other writers.

"Lumber the writing with nothing—let it go as lightly as the bird flies in the air or a fish swims in the sea.

"Avoid all poetical similes; be faithful to the perfect likelihoods of nature—healthy, exact, simple, disdaining ornaments.

"Do not go into criticisms or arguments at all; make full blooded, rich, flush, natural works.

"Insert natural things, indestructibles, idioms, characteristics, rivers, states, persons, &c. Be full of strong sensual germs.

"Poet! beware lest your poems are made in the spirit that comes from the study of pictures of things—and not from the spirit that comes from the contact with real things themselves."

John Burroughs thought those rules so requisite to the attainment of the right point of view on Whitman that he included them in his compact Britannica article about the poet.

What, now, proceeded from forty years of patient, valiant observance of those rules?—I count from the early fifties of the nineteenth century, when "Leaves of Grass" began to take clear form in Whitman's mind, to the first two years of the nineties, when he was still revising.

This kind of thing, among some other kinds, proceeded from that observance: (We are reading from the dozen pages of the "Song of the Broad-Axe," which comes about one-third of the way in the 500 pages of "Leaves of Grass"):

*"Where the city stands with the brawniest breed of orators and bards;*
*Where the city stands that is beloved by these, and loves them in return, and understands them;*
*Where no monuments exist to heroes, but in the common words and deeds;*
*Where thrift is in its place, and prudence is in its place;*

. . . . . .

*Where the slave ceases, and the master of slaves ceases;*
*Where the populace rise at once against the never-ending audacity of elected persons;*
*Where fierce men and women pour forth, as the sea to the whistle of death pours its sweeping and unript waves;*
*Where outside authority enters always after the precedence of inside authority;*

. . . . . .

*Where equanimity is illustrated in affairs;*
*Where speculations on the Soul are encouraged;*

. . . . . .

*Where the city of the faithfulest friends stands;*
*Where the city of the cleanliness of the sexes stands;*
*Where the city of the healthiest fathers stands;*
*Where the city of the best-bodied mothers stands,*
*There the great city stands."*

The fifth verse, from the beginning, of that passage I omitted for the moment because it ought to be examined separately. It reads:

*"Where the men and women think lightly of the laws."*

In that short line—a short line for Whitman—is the source of seventy years of trouble; a trouble that searched out the vitals of Whitman's enemy-critics with a good deal sharper pang than it did his capacious ones.

"Don't deliver it!" squealed James Russell Lowell to an English noble who had brought a letter of introduction to Whitman. "Don't deliver it! Do you know who Walt Whitman is? Why—a rowdy, a New York tough, a loafer, a frequenter of low places—friend of cab drivers!"

The friend of cab drivers did not, however, contemplate lawless incursion upon the civic rights of James Russell Lowell. But he

did want men to "think lightly of the laws" when "the laws" meant spirit-blinding regulations; meant rituals, traditions, and superstitions that cast oncoming exultant human material into the same mold that had held long gone generations of men.

The fact is that Whitman was essentially servant, soldier and celebrant of the essential laws—laws having to do with human freedom en masse and with individual liberty. That he was such a servant, soldier and celebrant he proved at dear cost. He served in the most exacting and least exhilarating way for nearly three years to help enforce essential laws. He served—served with his hands and eyes—northerners and southerners, white man and black man in the Union hospitals. And because he was tireless, and because he would let himself be revolted by no task however sickening, he sowed the seeds of a disease that wrecked his physical life and, during a considerable part of it, kept him prisoner to a wheeled chair.

He was for law so long as it fostered and was compatible with what he was also ever serving and celebrating—"the dear love of comrades." And by comrades he meant not individuals alone, but cities, states, kingdoms, republics. Lowell was right. For Whitman did also mean "dear comradeship" of and with cab drivers, of and with "frequenters of low places," and to them he said in his divine, rugged compassion, "When the sun shuts you out, I will shut you out."

Many things about Whitman are taken for granted by persons who have read essays about him but who never gave half a day's exact attention to Whitman's "Leaves." But one thing that emphatically is not to be taken for granted is that Whitman was an undiscriminating lover and celebrant of "the dear comrades." He had a goodly strain of aristocrat in him. He came of a family that is numbered among the Caucasian families longest planted in our northern soil. He was unusual and not dandified in dress, but he was extremely fastidious as to the cleanliness of his person and raiment. When he used the word "radical," as he does use it in the third of the credo passages quoted—a "good heart as a radical possession and habit"—he used it, not socially or politically,

but in its original Latin significance derived from radix meaning root.

He could upon occasion be robustly intolerant, as in his appalling diatribe on Samuel Johnson. He loved, and he proclaimed that he was writing for, "the average man," but he did not like average qualities or average poetry, and in the "Boughs" credo he declares the mission of "these states" to be:

" . . . ploughing up in earnest the interminable average fallows of humanity—not 'good government' merely, in the common sense—is the justification and main purpose of these United States."

One of the quaintest discoveries in literature was the written proof of his consciousness that "these states" and the "dear comrades" had a great deal of plowing still to do. The proof was a scrap of paper which Horace Traubel picked up from the floor of the forlorn house in Mickle Street, Camden, where Whitman passed the last decade of his life. Traubel gave it finally to Newton of the "Amenities," and Newton, having used its text as a Christmas card in a panic year of our annals, reproduced it in his collection called "A Magnificent Farce." The scrap of paper bore these words:

"Go on, my dear Americans, whip your horses to the utmost—excitement! money! politics!—open all your valves and let her go—swing, whirl with the rest—you will soon get under such momentum you can't stop if you would. Only make provision, betimes, old states and new states, for several thousand insane asylums. You are in a fair way to create a whole nation of lunatics."

Horace Traubel gave Whitman a sly look as he read that out, and the old man replied to the look with, "That's old, lad, and kind o' violent—don't you think?—for me. Yet I don't know but it still holds good."

## XLIX

## WHITMAN AND CERTAIN CURIOSITIES OF CRITICISM

Some thirty years ago an aged New England essayist who had fought gallantly in our Civil War sat down to write about an aged poet who had served, to the permanent impairment of his health, as nurse in the same war, who had been printer and carpenter, and who, all his life, kept himself in narrow circumstances because he gave much and would not write to be popular. About that man the New Englander wrote these words:

"Of all our poets, he is really the least simple, the most metricious; and this is the reason why the honest consciousness of the classes which he most celebrates,—the drover, the teamster, the soldier,—has never been reached by his songs. He talks of labor as one who has never really labored; his "Drum-Taps" proceed from one who has never personally responded to the tap of the drum. . . . No one can be said to lead a noble life who writes puffs of himself and offers them to editors, or who borrows money from men as poor as himself and fails to repay it."

A dozen years pass.

The essayist and Civil War veteran is eighty-three. One day he is musing upon those matters which wise old men are wont to muse upon—not upon the "querilities" of present existence, to use a word a great man coined, but upon those opportunities and splendors which another existence may hold. Heartily, "with deep emotion," the record says, the veteran of arms and of letters repeats these lines:

*"Joy! shipmate—joy!*
*(Pleas'd to my Soul at death I cry;)*
*Our life is closed—our life begins;*
*The long, long anchorage we leave,*
*The ship is clear at last—she leaps!*
*She swiftly courses from the shore;*
*Joy! shipmate—joy!"*

The old colonel's voice dies away. "I should like," he says gently to his wife—"I should like to have those lines engraved on my memorial stone."

That, as I piece it together from books of memoirs, is eloquent of the different reactions of Colonel Thomas Wentworth Higginson, parson, abolitionist, commander of a black regiment, and one of the *Atlantic Monthly's* elect, to Walt Whitman, printer, carpenter, real estate dealer, poet, prophet.

The curiosities and contradictions of criticism caused by Whitman's "Leaves of Grass," for that is the book containing the passages which roused Thomas Wentworth Higginson's disgust—he said they stirred up physical nausea in him—and by the passage he wished to have graven on his tombstone, are curiosities and contradictions proceeding not from one type of mind alone. They represent almost every type of mind, many kinds of culture, and many lands.

"Leaves of Grass" appeared in its first version and arrangement seventy-two years ago.

Lying before me is a book which appeared sixty-seven years after "Leaves of Grass." For a few weeks of 1922 it was among the best sellers of the hour, although it is a more significant book than that statement would imply. Its title is "Four and Twenty Minds"; its author the young Tuscan essayist, Giovanni Papini, who is now disturber and now protagonist of tradition; it contains studies of figures in the history of letters so divergent as Dante, Herbert Spencer, Nietzsche, Dean Swift—and Walt Whitman.

Mark that Giovanni Papini is a Tuscan; for to be a Tuscan is to command, almost from the cradle, melodious and correct speech, and to possess, in a degree hardly approached since Greece was in flower, the sense of beauty and form—the sense of poetry. From whom did this Tuscan, with his inheritance of Dante, learn the meaning of poetry? He tells you:

"I must confess that I, a Tuscan, an Italian, a Latin, learned the meaning of poetry not through Virgil or through Dante . . . but through the puerile enumerations and the long, passionate invocations of the good reaper of the 'Leaves of Grass.' . . . I cannot write of

Walt Whitman, I confess, with an easy objectivity. The soul and the verse of the sage of Manhattan are too intimately related in my mind to one of the most important discoveries of my early youth: the discovery of poetry. . . . I breathed in the poetry of the sea, of the city, of the universe—without a thought of the pale scholars who count the syllables of a soul in emotion as they would count, if they could, the notes of the nightingale that sings for love. . . . Even to-day, though so many years have passed, I cannot read without emotion the 'Whispers of Heavenly Death' or 'There Was a Child Went Forth.' . . . I have never forgotten those wondrous hours of my boyhood."

Then follows a forty-page study of Whitman. The last page but one contains these words:

"Whitman's soul is as vast as the world, as all-enfolding as God."

I do not give you here the remainder of that glowing page, because I wish to pique you into buying the book. It will be a service if I do that.

Colonel Higginson asserted that "no one can be said to lead a noble life who writes puffs of himself and offers them to editors." Walt Whitman certainly did write emphatic and by no means unflattering declarations of his poetic purposes, and he did, quite openly and joyously, offer them to editors. His method was not in the best taste, but, as a matter of ethics, it is to be preferred to the present method of hiring a press agent and, behind his back, seeking to float self-adulation. In any case, as Walt Whitman died when Giovanni Papini was a lad of ten years, and as that lad first read Whitman in Italian, a language the poet did not know, it is not probable that Papini was influenced by activities which preclude the leading of "a noble life."

You have read in Papini the Whitman confession of a significant man; can you be patient if an insignificant one here interjects his pennyworth of confession?

I revere Whitman, but I also find in him things appalling and grotesque. I can recognize in him one who stands, in his own magnificent phrase in "Songs at Seventy," among "the cannoneers of song and thought," but sometimes it seems as if, having demolished the enemy's works, he might mercifully cease firing. He believed that if man is sacred, so, too, are the body and

the function which perpetuate man, and that this body and this function are legitimate matter for poetry. Of that strain in Whitman's poetry, Thoreau said he did not so much "wish that it was not written as that men and women were so pure that they could read it without harm." Even so, Whitman seems not always to know when to stop. Neither, I suppose, does Niagara, and the wild horse is swift—and wild.

And so, often and often, it is the less portentous Whitman, the Whitman of the fleeting things of life that still have beauty and eloquence in them, if only we could search out the heart of their mystery, who speaks to me in my small affairs. In such a strain he spoke especially to me on a day when a bird had died —a being of the most gracious manners of any being I have known. He died on his mistress' bosom—quietly. Beautiful and solemn to me—a kind of sacredness in it—that trustful, piteous seeking for life where he had found so much love. And it was while I was thinking upon the exceeding fair memory my friend had left that I came upon these lines in Whitman's "November Boughs"; and I was thankful for them, for they told me what I had not known how to tell myself—the meaning which that little life had held and the service it had given:

*"Did we count great, O soul, to penetrate the themes of mighty books,*
*Absorbing deep and full from thoughts, plays, speculations?*
*But now from thee to me, caged bird, to feel thy joyous warble,*
*Filling the air, the lonesome room, the long forenoon,*
*Is it not just as great, O soul?"*

I have said that the curiosities and contradictions of Whitman criticism are of almost boundless variety—and so of almost boundless interest and stimulation. They began to find utterance immediately "Leaves of Grass" appeared. The year was 1855. In that year was written the celebrated Emerson letter to Whitman which you will not find in Doctor Emerson's definitive edition of his father's books, nor in Cabot's life of Emerson, but which is included in the desirable *vade mecum* edition of "Leaves of Grass," prepared by the late Stuart P. Sherman, that the Scribners sell for a dollar. Phrases of the Emerson letter are as decisive

in the tribute-money of American criticism as the ring of honest coin on a counter:

"I am not blind to the worth of the wonderful gift of 'Leaves of Grass,' . . . the most extraordinary piece of wit and wisdom that America has yet contributed. . . . I give you joy of your free and brave thought. I have great joy in it. I find incomparable things said incomparably well. . . . I greet you at the beginning of a great career. . . . I rubbed my eyes a little, to see if this sunbeam were no illusion. . . . I wish to see my benefactor, and have felt much like striking my tasks and visiting New York to pay you my respects."

A few months pass. Emerson's fellow townsman, Henry David Thoreau, does visit New York to see the "benefactor." Copious record of the visit, and the utterances to which it prompted Mr. Thoreau, may be enjoyed in the sixth volume of the great Houghton Mifflin edition (1906) of the books, letters, and journals of Thoreau.

In quoting Thoreau on Whitman, it is important to remember that, as in the instance of the Emerson letter, quotation is from one of the purest minded men whose names are eminent in American literature. After the visit, Thoreau wrote of Whitman:

"He is apparently the greatest democrat the world has seen. . . . Though peculiar and rough in his exterior, he is essentially a gentleman. . . . On the whole it ['Leaves of Grass'] sounds to me very brave and American, after whatever deductions. I do not believe that all the sermons, so called, that have been preached in this land put together are equal to it for preaching. . . . Though rude and sometimes ineffectual, it is a great primitive poem—an alarum or trumpet-note ringing through the American camp. . . . He is awfully good. . . . You can't confound him with the other inhabitants of Brooklyn or New York. How they must shudder when they read him! . . . He is a great fellow."

Thoreau was then thirty-nine years old; Whitman was thirty-seven.

Again a few months pass.

Thoreau has sent Walt Whitman's new book to England, as gift to a friend named Cholmondeley. That Englander, who loved New England, started to read "Leaves of Grass" to his stepfather, the Reverend Z. Macaulay (not the Zachary Macaulay

who was Lord Macaulay's father), and the Reverend Z. Macaulay shouted that he would not hear it, and threatened to throw it in the fire, fire having long been a popular purge with the clergy—for others.

And so it went, and so it goes to this day. All minds reacted and still react in all ways to Whitman. The bureaucrat James Harlan, who was one of Lincoln's secretaries of the interior, turned him out of his place in the department for writing "Leaves of Grass"; the bureaucrat attorney-general Speed promptly gave him a place in his department, if not for writing "Leaves of Grass" at least because he thought Harlan's action outrageous.

Meanwhile, Lincoln, looking out of a window one day, saw Whitman, unknown to him, pass by. "There," he said, "goes a *man!*" The day was to come when the *man*—not organ-voiced Bryant, not Lowell, the scholar, not graceful Holmes, not tuneful Longfellow, not grave, sweet Whittier, not saintly Emerson—but the *man* was to write the perfect threnody of American poetry; the lament for Abraham Lincoln that, so I heard my father tell, no man who helped Lincoln fight the great fight can read without tears; the dirge called:

O CAPTAIN! MY CAPTAIN!

O Captain! my Captain! our fearful trip is done;
The ship has weather'd every rack, the prize we sought is won;
The port is near, the bells I hear, the people all exulting,
While follow eyes the steady keel, the vessel grim and daring:

But O heart! heart! heart!
O the bleeding drops of red,
Where on the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

O Captain! my Captain! rise up and hear the bells;
Rise up—for you the flag is flung—for you the bugle trills;
For you bouquets and ribbon'd wreaths—for you the shores a-crowding;
For you they call, the swaying mass, their eager faces turning;

Here Captain! dear father!
This arm beneath your head;
It is some dream that on the deck,
You've fallen cold and dead.

My Captain does not answer, his lips are pale and still;
My father does not feel my arm, he has no pulse nor will;
The ship is anchor'd safe and sound, its voyage closed and done;
From fearful trip, the victor ship comes in with object won:

Exult, O shores, and ring, O bells!
But I, with mournful tread,
Walk the deck my Captain lies,
Fallen cold and dead.

# L

## GOLDSMITH'S "VICAR OF WAKEFIELD"

(First published in 1766)

*There are an hundred faults in this thing, and an hundred things that might be said to prove them beauties: but it is needless. A book may be amusing with numerous errors, or it may be very dull without a single absurdity. The hero of this piece unites in himself the three greatest characters upon earth: he is a priest, an husbandman, and the father of a family. He is drawn as ready to teach, and ready to obey—as simple in affluence, and majestic in adversity. In this age of opulence and refinement, whom can such a character please? Such as are fond of high life will turn with disdain from the simplicity of his country fireside; such as mistake ribaldry for humor will find no wit in his harmless conversation; and such as have been taught to deride religion will laugh at one whose chief stores of comfort are drawn from futurity.*

("The Vicar of Wakefield.") OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

*Goldsmith, with all his imprudences, never forgot the one thing needful to a good author—style.*

LEIGH HUNT.

How gently pervasive among our books is this our friend sleeping now for a century and a half in his grave in the Temple yard, whither comes, subdued but unescapable the roar of London streets he knew so well. I walk among the shelves in the sunlit room, and from this one, from that, from those yonder, from half a dozen, he gives me hail, seeming to say: "What mood, friend, art thou in to-day? Can I divert thee?"

I stand before the tiers of drama, and here is the best comedy but one that the eighteenth century stage of England gave us.

It is his.

I linger among the old poets. Here are two of the most persuasive and melodious didactic poems in any language.

They are his.

I glance toward the great tales of the world—the stories that have passed frontiers and outlived eras—and there I see a pure, wise, gentle narrative of domestic life that so great a man as Goethe called "one of the best novels that has ever been written."

It is his.

I run my eye along the stately octavos of history, and tucked in among them are two stocky duodecimos—an unassuming but thoroughly readable little history of England from the time of the Britons to the death of George II. For a scholar's purposes it is not much save as a clarifier, and for a specialist's it is nothing, but for yours and mine—for us average readers—it serves an end, and I sometimes think that if we knew all it contains we should know—more than we do know. As I turn its pages I like to think of Johnson's tribute to the historical style of the writer of it. "Minute without tediousness," he said, "and general without confusion," and called that style an art. I love the pith of the book's first sentence—"It is fortunate for mankind that those periods of history which are the least serviceable are the least known." It seems to me there is a whole essay in that.

And those stocky duodecimos are Goldsmith's.

I browse among the English essayists on the north wall, and there amid the compact ranks of Shaftesbury and Addison and Johnson and De Quincey and Landor and Hazlitt and Lamb and Leigh Hunt are "The Bee" and "The Citizen of the World"—the most graceful, and genial essays of the fugitive kind that were to appear until Lamb caught up and enlarged that form sixty years later.

And they are Goldsmith's.

From the alcove where the ponderous books of reference stand I tug the two volumes of "An History of the Earth and Animated Nature," out-dated now but charming reading, and authoritative enough to have been reissued with superb plates, and, happily, an unmutilated text, so lately as 1855—eighty years after the work left the author's hands. And I mind me how Johnson, when he heard that his friend was putting the book together from Buffon, said, "He is now writing a Natural History, and will make it as entertaining as a Persian Tale," and how Cumberland in his

memoirs tartly remarks, "Poor fellow, he hardly knew a turkey from a goose but when he saw it on the table."

And that book, which, regardless of its "science," you can read with pleasure by the hour, is—as to the pleasurable part of it—Oliver Goldsmith's.

That is a true thing, surely, which is carved on the tablet in the Abbey—the tribute to him who "left scarcely any style of writing untouched, and touched nothing he did not adorn."

Greeting me thus, when I will it, with his incomparable deftness, and his smiling wisdom in so many kinds, he makes the room very pleasant; the house seems cozy with him.

And how happily he is neighbored! How men of parts, from old Sir James Prior in his circumstantial life of Oliver, and John Forster in his vivid one, to the novelist Black and the essayist Austin Dobson in their compact ones, have delighted to speak kindly of him who was unfailingly kind to others! It is with more than kindness, it is with love they write. One could bind up a bouquet of fond phrases about Goldsmith from the masters who gave to Goldsmith years of study and a lifetime of affection. Irving, who wrote the best short life of him and who transplanted his style from the Temple gardens to the gardens of Sunnyside, calls him, in Dante's phrase, "My master and my author." Scott and Leigh Hunt, seeking the word at once soft and opulent which should define the spell of that style so gracious and so clear, both chose the word "delicious." Lord Byron called "The Vicar" "the most exquisite of all romances in miniature," adding "and perhaps this is the best shape in which romances can appear," and Donald Grant Mitchell asked this fond question, "Who, with any relish for the beatitudes of letters, has not tender reverence for the memory of Goldsmith?"

The supreme tribute was paid by the supreme literary figure in the annals of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. For Goethe said:

"I lately chanced to fall in with 'The Vicar of Wakefield,' and felt compelled to read the little book over again, from beginning to end, being not a little affected by the vivid recollection of all that I have owed to the author, for the last seventy years. The influence Goldsmith

exercised upon me, just at the chief point of my development, cannot be estimated. This lofty and benevolent irony, this just and comprehensive way of viewing things, this equanimity under every change, and whatever else all the kindred virtues may be termed—such things were a most admirable training for me, and, surely, these are the sentiments which in the end lead us back from all the mistaken paths of life."

"The beatitudes of letters." That is the spirit of "The Vicar of Wakefield" in four words. Its note is purity—purity of thought and of style, and its spirit is made a living thing by Goldsmith's study of Charles Primrose, who is presented as the narrator of the joys and sorrows of the Primrose family. That study is compounded of a lovely trustfulness by which the sophisticated are humbled and the arrogant are shamed, of a patience which endures without repining because it has its roots deep in moral grandeur, of harmless pomposities and vanities which keep a saintly man a fellow-man, and of a spontaneous kindliness and a pleased interest in men and their affairs which cause the vicar to be a constantly engaging and various factor in the tale.

What goodly deed he next will perform we never know; into what ridiculous plight or into what grievous strait his trustfulness will betray him we can never be sure. He is wholly disarming and his weapon is a perfect naïveté. I know no other tale wherein weighty wisdom and clear sense of the true values of existence and of character are so mingled with ingenuous and pious credulity. Attend to the first page of the vicar's narrative and you catch the spell while still you marvel that a thing so artless has had the power to draw men on—the philosopher and the child alike—for two hundred pages these 160 years:

"I was ever of opinion, that the honest man who married and brought up a large family did more service than he who continued single and only talked of population. From this motive, I had scarcely taken orders a year before I began to think seriously of matrimony, and chose my wife as she did her wedding-gown, not for a fine glossy surface, but such qualities as would wear well. To do her justice, she was a good-natured notable woman; and as for breeding, there were few country ladies who could show more. She could read any English book without much spelling, but for pickling, preserving, and cookery, none could excel her. She prided herself also upon being an excellent

contriver in housekeeping; though I could never find that we grew richer with all her contrivances.

"However, we loved each other tenderly, and our fondness increased as we grew old. There was, in fact, nothing that could make us angry with the world or with each other. We had an elegant house, situated in a fine country, and a good neighborhood. The year was spent in moral or rural amusements, in visiting our rich neighbors, and relieving such as were poor. We had no revolutions to fear, nor fatigues to undergo; all our adventures were by the fireside, and all our migrations from the blue bed to the brown."

In this household there is much entertaining, especially of the poor relations. Cousins, even to the fortieth remove, remember their consanguinity without help from the herald's office:

" . . . so that if we had not very rich, we generally had very happy friends about us; for this remark will hold good through life, that the poorer the guest the better pleased he ever is with being treated; and as some men gaze with admiration at the colors of a tulip, or the wing of a butterfly, so I was by nature an admirer of happy human faces."

There were trials but they took wing before so much equanimity and so firm a determination to find and to make this a happy world:

"Thus we lived several years in a state of much happiness; not but that we sometimes had those little rubs which Providence sends to enhance the value of its favors. My orchard was often robbed by school boys, and my wife's custards plundered by the cats or the children. The squire would sometimes fall asleep in the most pathetic parts of my sermon, or his lady return my wife's civilities at church with a mutilated courtesy. But we soon got over the uneasiness caused by such accidents, and usually in three or four days began to wonder how they vexed us."

Sorrows heavy and numerous descend upon this good man. The honor of his family is besmirched, his health is wrecked, his property is destroyed, and he is thrown into prison. He continues in well-doing—busy, officious, trustful still, and still unaffectedly the saint while remaining the amusing, pathetic fellow human. Just a touch from the prison life as unfolded in the twenty-seventh chapter which opens with the vicar's refusal to heed his disheart-

ened family's plea that he meddle not in schemes for the reformation of his fellow prisoners:

"'Excuse me,' returned I. 'These people, however fallen, are still men, and that is a very good title to my affection. Good counsel rejected returns to enrich the giver's bosom; and though the instruction I communicate may not mend them, yet it will assuredly mend myself.'"

He recounts the sly tricks the criminal and the wanton played upon him:

"However, I took no notice of all that this mischievous group of little beings could do; but went on, perfectly sensible that what was ridiculous in my attempts would excite mirth only the first or second time, while what was serious would be permanent. My design succeeded, and in less than six days some were penitent, and all attentive."

There is no cant, no forcing of the note, in all Goldsmith's treatment of his hero's life in a foul English prison of the mid-eighteenth century. On the contrary, there is a great deal of far-visioned sociology, much of which is only now getting itself wrought into practice and more of which was at least half a century in advance of the public opinion of Goldsmith's time. It is this attribute of the book which prompts the penetrating Cross of Yale to say that "'The Vicar of Wakefield' as a generative force has been felt throughout Europe."

With perfect fairness to Goldsmith we may close his book not upon what is weighty and generative in it, but upon one of the simplicities that have endeared it to mankind—with that passage where, after sorrows bravely borne, the light breaks through and joy crowns sacrifice and the only tears are happy tears. The vicar, decorous and fine in prosperity as he had been in adversity, is about to perform the office which he esteems the most solemn of his calling. Lovers reunited are to be married. He that accounted himself a connoisseur in "happy human faces" now would have them grave:

"I went down, where I found the whole company as merry as affluence and innocence could make them. However, as they were now preparing for a very solemn ceremony, their laughter entirely displeased me. I told them of the grave, becoming, and sublime deport-

ment they should assume upon this mystical occasion, and read them two homilies and a thesis of my own composing, in order to prepare them. Yet they still seemed perfectly refractory and ungovernable. Even as we were going along to church, to which I led the way, all gravity had quite forsaken them, and I was often tempted to turn back in indignation."

But he did not—the good old man.

# LI

## BENJAMIN FRANKLIN'S AUTOBIOGRAPHY

(Composed between the years 1771 and 1789)

*THE MAN:*

*The first Yankee.*
("Short History of American Literature," 1922.)
STUART P. SHERMAN.

*The modern Prometheus.*
IMMANUEL KANT.

*The man who, even more than Lincoln, might be called the first American.*
("Letters," 1913.) CHARLES ELIOT NORTON.

*The typical republican citizen.*
("Memories and Thoughts," 1906.) FREDERIC HARRISON.

*Such a servant, citizen, and patriot as no other country ever had in the history of man.*
(In Everyman's Library Edition of Franklin's "Autobiography.")
W. MACDONALD.

*Eripuit coelo fulmen, sceptrumque tyrannis.*
TURGOT, BARON DE L'AULNE.

*Franklin, when he died, had nations for his mourners, and the great and good throughout the world as his eulogists.*
("History of the United States," 1854.) GEORGE BANCROFT.

*His virtues and renown negotiated for him; and before the second year of his mission [to France] had expired no one conceived it possible to refuse fleets and armies to the countrymen of Franklin.*
(French Academician and Jurist.) PIERRE LOUIS LACRETELLE.

*I count him among the most sensible of the sons of men, a verra large and open mind, with a gift of genius which could do its work with a sixpenny worth of string and an old key, while the French philosophers were building a tower to get at the clouds.*
(Conversation with Charles Eliot Norton, 1869.) THOMAS CARLYLE.

*AND HIS BOOK:*

*One of the most straightforward and unstudied narratives of its kind in the English language, if not in the world . . . one of the great books of all time . . . the one classic American autobiography.*

("English Biography," 1916.) WALDO H. DUNN.

*It is letters in business garb, literature with its apron on, addressing itself to the task, which in this country is every man's, of setting free the processes of growth, giving them facility and speed and efficacy.*

(In Century Classics Edition of Franklin's "Autobiography," 1901.)
WOODROW WILSON.

*His steady and downright character was a singularity which the accomplished diplomatists of France had not learned how to conquer. The simplicity of a republican, a presbyterian, and a printer, transported, at the age of seventy, into the most polished court of Europe, by amusing the frivolous and interesting the romantic, excited a disposition at Versailles favorable to his cause. . . . An independence of thought, a constant and direct reference to utility, a consequent abstinence from whatever is merely curious and ornamental, or even remotely useful, a talent for ingeniously betraying vice and prejudice into an admission of reason, and for exhibiting their sophisms in that state of undisguised absurdity in which they are ludicrous, with a singular power of striking illustration from homely objects, would justify us in calling Franklin the American Socrates.*

("Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh," Second London Edition—1853—Vol. II, pp. 202-203.)

IF you asked the wisest and most illustrious man you know to tell you how he became what he is, and he wrote out for you, fair and plain, 300 comfortable pages, giving with friendly detail, with many a soft sidelight, many a wise saw, and many a genial anecdote, the story of how he schooled himself to play a momentous and beneficent part in the world—then you would have a bundle of manuscript to which you would bend with intense interest and to your high profit.

That is precisely what Benjamin Franklin did a century and a half ago for all us Americans, and he did it because many of our forbears persistently asked him to do it.

The result was a book that in a true and beautiful sense is a kind of family inheritance of a whole people; an intimate document, sinewy, naïve and shrewd, direct from the hand of the most

versatile of the founders of that people's greatness. No other nation has such a possession. Entertaining, sober, wise, sedately vivid, with here and there a whimsical turn and now touched with caustic penetration, full of example and instruction for free men, written with such simplicity that a boy can enjoy it and with such acumen that old men love to reread it, it is our most valuable literary inheritance from fathers of the republic (not forgetting Hamilton's tracts and Paine's propaganda) and one of the finest specimens extant of a simple, lucid style. Here a nation builder tells his own story and yet there is not a grandiose line in the book. Always it is the great man in his simple aspect.

As to the simplicity of both the style and the attitude of the author of the Autobiography there is a point we ought to keep in mind. Benjamin Franklin was sixty-five years old when, in 1771, he sat down in the Bishop of St. Asaph's house at Twyford in England, where he was an honored guest, to write for his son the story of his life. Already he had done momentous work in the world and he knew it. He was eighty-three years old when he wrote the last pages in Philadelphia, and he was then [1789-90] beyond doubt the foremost citizen of the world—"citizen" as distinguished from any potentate, warrior, or man of title. He had long been, in Emerson's phrase, a man "whose majestic virtues made him idolized in France, feared in England, and obeyed in America."

But—and this is the point—no book of personal narrative is less vainglorious. No book of self-revelation is freer from the strain of contentiousness, querulousness and assertiveness which often envenoms the confidences of the great when they pour out their hearts to posterity. Franklin's long life was a steadfast war against sloth, bad sanitation, disease, imposition, and tyranny, but he lived equably. He defied royal commissions and parliaments and kings, but he did it with a calm that was more devastating than most men's righteous wrath. So he wrote—serenely, with a precision as conclusive as the multiplication table and with a charity that proved the tallow-chandler's son to be as fine a gentleman as that age of fine gentlemen produced.

He wrote without affectation. If in his narrative there should

be outcroppings of vanity—well, he would confess vanity in advance, and he does that on the second page of his story in these cordial words:

"Hereby, too, I shall indulge the inclination so natural in old men, to be talking of themselves and their own past actions; and I shall indulge it without being tiresome to others, who, through respect to age, might conceive themselves obliged to give me a hearing, since this may be read, or not, as any one pleases. And lastly (I may as well confess it, since my denial of it will be believed by nobody), perhaps, I shall a good deal gratify my own *vanity*. Indeed, I scarce ever heard or saw the introductory words, 'Without vanity I may say,' etc., but some vain thing immediately followed. Most people dislike vanity in others, whatever share they have of it themselves; but I give it fair quarter wherever I meet with it, being persuaded that it is often productive of good to the possessor and to others that are within his sphere of action; and therefore, in many cases, it would not be altogether absurd if a man were to thank God for his vanity, among the other comforts of life."

On the same page is this disarming bit—it comes just after he has said that his posterity might like to know how a boy "born and bred in poverty and obscurity" had risen to "a state of affluence and some degree of reputation in the world," and had gone through life with "a considerable share of felicity":

"That felicity, when I reflected on it, has induced me sometimes to say that, were it offered to my choice, I should have no objection to a repetition of the same life from its beginnings, only asking the advantages authors have in a second edition to correct some faults of the first. . . . But though this were denied, I should still accept the offer."

Again—a few pages further on—one of his irresistible asides:

"By my rambling digressions I perceive myself to be grown old. I used to write more methodically. But one does not dress for private company as for a public ball. 'Tis perhaps only negligence."

Such is the benevolent old father of the republic who is going to tell you, his child, the story of fifty-one years of his life—only fifty-one years, for, unhappily, like the autobiographies of Benvenuto Cellini and Edward Gibbon, with which it ranks, this one is a fragment. Franklin carried his story only to the year 1757,

the year of his mission to England on behalf of the colonists, who even then were tried almost beyond endurance by the stupidities, exactions, and oppressions of English maladministration. But you will hear from him all about the years that formed and equipped him for a life that unfolds itself, when you survey it in all its aspects, as a homespun epic of friendship with all the world.

What a steadying book to give a boy! You can do that for eighty cents if you seek out at the stores the little Everyman's Library edition in cloth. That one is worth your seeking because in it the autobiography proper is supplemented with a hundred pages by the English scholar, W. Macdonald, which carry the story from 1757 to the end of Franklin's life. Briton though he is, it is in an American strain almost peppery that Mr. Macdonald extols Franklin. Turn, for illustration, to page 262 of his narrative and note these lines of his, "Make the best of it that we may, the 29th of January, 1774, was a disgraceful day for England." Is your curiosity aroused? It may well be, for that day which disgraced England was a critical day in the life of Benjamin Franklin and of the colonies.

Publicly and grossly affronted in London by as choice a scoundrel as ever held office under George III, Franklin bore the ordeal with equanimity almost godlike, but, it is believed, on that day he, so capable of forgiving much, came to the decision that for him and his compatriots across the water to forgive more would be to play the part of poltroons.

That decision meant war and liberty.

Horace Walpole told the essential story of the outrage in his four-line pasquinade on Alexander Wedderburn, later Earl of Rosslyn:

> "Sarcastic Sawney, swollen with spite and prate,
> On silent Franklin poured his venal hate.
> The calm philosopher without reply,
> Withdrew, and gave his country liberty!"

The Autobiography ends seventeen years before the "disgraceful day for England" and twenty-one years before the commencement of Franklin's service for us at the court of Versailles, but the point of the references is that his uncompleted narrative shows

you how the great man schooled himself, from boyhood onward, to meet, with dignity and calm the crises, the heavy burdens, the fearful perplexities, the indignities and the triumphs which crowded the grandest old age a man ever lived.

That is why his little book is a steadying book for a boy. Not that it automatically will make other Franklins out of average boys, but it will, in a manner specific and entertaining, show the average boy what useful and profitable things he may do for himself and for the world by the exercise of common sense, good manners, poise, industry, thrift, application, and inquiry. It does not send him to school to the heroic virtues but to the everyday virtues, and as a result of that schooling this average boy, before he is well into adolescence, will have fallen in love with order, method, laudable curiosity, and the independent thinking which proceeds from that kind of curiosity. This average boy will, above all, be going to school to a teacher who was self-schooled—in all his eighty-four years Franklin had only two years of going to school to others—and the benefit we gain from this self-schooled teacher is that he constantly is showing us how we, too, may school ourselves.

He tells us in two or three pages what books he read as a boy—they were the fiber-making, style-building books like Bunyan's "Pilgrim's Progress," and Defoe's "Essay on Projects," and Plutarch in North's translation, and Xenophon's "Memorabilia," which taught him how to argue, and "an odd volume" of the "Spectator"—and he tells us in two pages more how he formed his style, a style instinct with quiet dignity. It was the "odd volume" of "Spectator" which helped him to form that style, and to Addison he credited the ability to express himself which really made him what he was in the world.

He tells us how he ran away at the age of seventeen to a city 400 miles from his home in Boston and how, walking into the city of his destination—and of his destiny—the girl whom ultimately he was to marry saw him munching a roll, and laughed at him. He tells us of General Edward Braddock and the awful forty-mile flight from Fort Duquesne, of George Whitefield, the revivalist, and what Whitefield's eloquence did to his pocketful of

gold, of colonial governors, of fellow 'prentices, and of all the kinds of things he was interested in and worked on.

Once, in studying Franklin's life, I made a list of those things and pasted it inside the cover of the book. Here it is in part: Electricity, treaties, hospitals, literary clubs, street sweeping, universities, the gulf stream, stoves, essays, the post and post roads, army supply, the copper plate press, reformed spelling, daylight saving, the Declaration of Independence, the constitution of the United States, proverbs, swimming, newspapers, circulating libraries, almanacs; the Latin, Italian, Spanish, and French languages; police and fire departments, finance, militia, organization, lightning rods, the armonica or musical glasses, the guitar. The list is not complete, but it is full enough to be indicative, and there is not one item in it concerning which he did not either advance the knowledge of mankind or make some valuable improvement. He was the most comprehensive mind America has produced.

The man was far greater than his book, but if the book leads a young American into study of Franklin's essays and letters and state papers and into study of his career it will have led him into a world. That is the chief value of the "Autobiography." It is an introduction to our Yankee patriarch, who was wont to say, "Human felicity is produced, not so much by great pieces of good fortune that seldom happen, as by little advantages that occur every day." The rest of the passage concerns the advantages that accrue to a poor, young man from learning to shave himself. The patriarch said that such knowledge might contribute more to the young man's happiness in the long run than if you gave him a thousand guineas.

That was Franklin through and through—always specific.

## LII

## THE DICTIONARY

*Ah! words are pictures; a dictionary is the universe in alphabetical order. Rightly considered, the dictionary is the book above all books. All the other books are in it: it is only a matter of taking them out. And, too, what was Adam's first occupation when he left God's hands? Genesis tells us that he first named the animals by their names. Adam is no less the father of lexicography than of humanity.*

("Life and Letters," Second Series.) ANATOLE FRANCE.

*Neither is a dictionary a bad book to read. There is no cant in it, no excess of explanation, and it is full of suggestion,—the raw material of possible poems and histories. Nothing is wanting but a little shuffling, sorting, ligature, and cartilage.*

(Essay on Books, in "Society and Solitude.")

RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

*We sailed for America, and there made certain preparations. This took but little time. Two members of my family elected to go with me. Also a carbuncle. The dictionary says a carbuncle is a kind of jewel. Humor is out of place in a dictionary.*

("Following the Equator," Chapter I.) MARK TWAIN.

IF people knew more of the interesting things about the dictionary they would be more interested in the interesting things in the dictionary.

The story of the making of almost every worthy dictionary of our language is a romance—sometimes pathetic, sometimes heroic.

A dictionary used to mean a needy scholar, borrowed books, a London attic, and half a dozen copyists. To-day it means a staff of nearly four hundred specialists and the expenditure of more than a million dollars.

Dr. Samuel Johnson spent seven years on his dictionary—the first in our language that pretended to much—and he ended by owing £100 to the booksellers who had financed him.

Dr. Isaac Funk's staff of hundreds of specialists worked five

years on his "Standard Dictionary," and he spent more money on the "standard of colors," which is a feature of the book, than Samuel Johnson received for all his work. Dr. Funk spent $10,000 for color formulæ and color plates; Johnson received for his seven years of toil £1,575, out of which he had to pay the copyists. The comparison does not, however, take account of the greater value of money in Johnson's time.

Noah Webster worked twenty years on his dictionary, and the first edition of 2,500 copies (1828) was not sold out for thirteen years. But after his death came triumph such as never before had crowned the patient, honorable toil of a scholar, for in the mid-nineteenth century the Merriams of Springfield, Mass., paid the Webster family a quarter of a million dollars for merely a fourteen-year renewal of copyrights of Dr. Webster's dictionary and his spelling book.

Dr. Webster's son-in-law, Chauncey Goodrich, of Yale, who carried on, in part, the editing and reëditing of the dictionary after Noah's death, once summed up his fame with a tribute as impressive as an American scholar has ever received. He said:

"The name of Noah Webster is known familiarly to a greater number of the inhabitants of the United States than the name, probably, of any other individual except the Father of his Country."

Webster's was a busy, beautiful life—so earnest that sometimes it seemed officious, but always his was officiousness in good causes. He was resolute. When he, as he supposed, had his work well under way he decided that he was inadequately equipped for it. He stopped and gave ten years to the mastering of the main vocabularies of twenty languages.

He died in his eighty-fifth year, busy to the end over the noble language which he did more than any other *one* man before or since to put in order and to define. Scholarship had not made the old man a dry-as-dust. As he toiled on over his beloved words he would sometimes rise from his desk and go out of his study in New Haven to hear music, which he greatly loved, or to make a plea for the sparing of some old tree that was dear to him.

He was religious. When the doctors told him that the pneu-

monia he had contracted (they spelled it pneumony in his time and long after) was like to prove fatal he received the news calmly, saying that to him his powers seemed so little impaired that he had thought he had a long time to live. Then he spoke gently of the day of parting which impended, saying, "I know in Whom I have believed—I *know* in Whom I have believed, and that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that day."

Then he sighed peacefully and said that his life had been one of uniform enjoyment, because always it had been full of active labors for some valuable end. They were almost his last words.

A pleasant bit of literary history links him with the only English-speaking man worthy to be named as his predecessor in lexicography—Samuel Johnson. When he was young he read Johnson's "Rambler" papers—little essays, at once eloquent and sensible, on conduct, that still are well worth reading and re-reading—and the volume became one of the books that shaped his life. It is that kind of a book—fiber-making. He said that it made him resolve to fulfill every social obligation. Eminent and industrious scholar though he was, he did not feel that he was too eminent or too busy to be an alderman of New Haven. In that sense of social-civic obligation he was like Emerson, who was a member of the Concord fire department.

Emerson loved a dictionary—all kinds of dictionaries, for his was an ordered and accurate mind—but he loved them not unless they were under his hand. He knew, too, that most of us are so negligent that a dictionary which is on a shelf twenty feet away from a student's or a business man's working table might as well be in the attic. The accessibility of reference books was, he said, one of his "dreams for the American house." The passage comes in his pregnant, easy-reading "Journals"—in the volume containing the entries for the year 1868:

"Ah, what a blessing to live in a house which has on the ground-floor one room or one cabinet in which a Worcester's Unabridged; a Liddell and Scott [Greek]; an Andrews and Stoddard [Latin]; Lemprière's Classical; a 'Gradus ad Parnassum'; a Haydn's 'Dictionary of Dates'; a 'Biographie Générale'; a Spiers' French, and a Flügel's

German Dictionary—where these and their equivalents, if equivalents can be, are always at hand. A house, I mean, where the seniors, who are at fault about school questions, can inquire of the juniors with some security of a right answer. This is one of my dreams for the American house."

The proudest piece of prose in our language—next to the Declaration of Independence—is connected with a dictionary. The words are memorable for two reasons: They made history, for they ended the slavish days of patronage by showing that the better way was to bring author and publisher together to treat like men of business instead of forcing the author to cringe to a rich noble for funds to carry on his work. They constitute a classic example of just rebuke. They utter haughty resentment without rancor. They are vigorous but not abusive. Every sentence is a rapier thrust, clean, graceful, deadly, and from no sentence could a word be spared. There is no violence, no vituperation, but rebuff so stately and measured that it has the solemnity of excommunication.

Recall that the wife of the dictionary maker who wrote the proud letter had died in the fifth year of his seven years of anxious and heavy toil—the wife of whom he said many a year after she was gone, "Sir, I have known what it was to have a wife, and I have known what it was to *lose a wife.* It had almost broke my heart." Consider the fretted seeking of books hither and yon, and the eating up of funds in copyists' wages, and the fact that he was doing his work on a scale which no man of his nation had dreamed of attempting before, and you will find not only lofty dignity but deep pathos in the letter Samuel Johnson, £100 in debt to his backers, wrote to the Earl of Chesterfield when he learned that that combination of statesman, popinjay, and litterateur was dreaming and scheming that to him should fall the honor of the new dictionary's dedication:

"My Lord, I have been lately informed, by the proprietor of *The World,* that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the publick, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished, is an honor, which, being very little accustomed to favors, from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

"When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lord-

ship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address; and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre;*—that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged, that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in publick, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I had done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

"Seven years, my Lord, have now past, since I waited in your outward rooms, or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favor. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a Patron before.

"The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

"Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labors, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the Publick should consider me as owing that to a Patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

"Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favorer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation, my Lord, your Lordship's most humble, most obedient servant,

"SAM. JOHNSON."

Carlyle called the letter "that far famed Blast of Doom proclaiming that patronage should be no more." Chesterfield retained his equanimity—he always did—and attempted no reply. Somebody asked him once what he thought of the letter. He said he thought it "very well written.'

There is another tale of equanimity in connection with the book. When Johnson, who was a terribly dilatory man, partly because

he was melancholic and partly because he almost always did a thing better than he had planned to, sent his messenger to the bookseller with the last batch of copy for the dictionary, Mr. Millar said, "Thank God, I have done with him!" When that was repeated to Johnson he, equable still, said, "I am glad that he thanks God for anything."

Here is a bit of contrast showing the increase in the number of words in our language and in the extension of lexicographic methods since the publication of Johnson's dictionary in 1755. Johnson's dictionary defined 60,000 words; Dr. Funk's (the Funk & Wagnalls "New Standard"), 450,000, not including 65,000 proper names.

Johnson's greatest service to lexicography was neither his definitions (Webster maintained that they often were not properly definitions but explanations) nor his etymologies but his quotations. He was the first to demonstrate their value as aids to definition. The use of them as such has vastly increased. The "New Standard" of to-day contains 32,000. The English Philological Society, which carried through the "Oxford Dictionary," has 6,000,000 quotations, collected since 1857 by 2,000 readers, mostly volunteers, filed in its scriptorium at Oxford. Sir James Murray gave thirty-three years of his life to the editing of this dictionary and died as it reached the phrase "turned down." Another curious fact: He discovered that among the most valued of his 2,000 volunteer readers was an inmate of an insane asylum.

A good dictionary that is strong not only in its definitions but in its derivations—as Webster's "New International" notably is—is a mine of history. "Didoes," in the sense of capers, traces back to Æneas' Dido, queen of Carthage. "Millinery" derives from "Milaner." Milaners were citizens of Milan who, dwelling in foreign parts, imported women's finery from their home town in Italy. "Solecism," which now defines more than one kind of incorrectness or impropriety, travels back to the Greek colony of Soloi or Soli on the frontier of Syria. Athenians settling there allowed their pure Attic speech to become incorrect and corrupt.

And so on with hundreds upon hundreds of words, each holding a treasure of fact and fancy. "Jewel," for example—does not a

jewel become more interesting when you recall that the word goes back to the Latin "jocus," which meant a plaything, a trinket, and then a joke.

The three latest presidents of the United States sent their countrymen scurrying to the dictionary, Mr. Wilson by the sense in which he used the word "peradventure," Mr. Harding with his revival of "normalcy," and Mr. Coolidge with his use of the word "choose."

"Blackguards" is a treasure. John Hill Burton in his admirable "History of the Reign of Queen Anne" gives it half a page. In the London of Anne's reign there was near the barracks of the Horse Guards, Whitehall, . . . "a sort of place of call for the hiring of people for casual purposes, such as running messages, carrying parcels, and perhaps in the performance of other services not all of them creditable. When waiting for another job they acted as shoeblacks. It was noticed that they ventured on a good deal of mocking mimicry of the Guards in drilling and parading. Hence they brought on themselves the name of 'the blackguards,' thus contributing its most powerful appellative to the vituperative nomenclature of the English language."

"Wicked, idle, pilfering vagrants," Defoe called them, and said they numbered "about ten thousand."

But a dictionary is full of peril unless handled with care. The lamentable experience of the child Florence in Mr. Tarkington's "Gentle Julia" is in point:

"'I like him because he's so uncouth,' she said. 'I think he's the uncouthest of any person I ever saw.'

"'Uncouth?'

"'Yes,' said Florence. 'Herbert said I was uncouth, and I looked it up in the ditchanary. It said, "Rare, exquisite, elegant, unknown, obs, unfamiliar, strange," and a whole lot else. I never did know a word that means so much, I guess. What's "obs" mean, Aunt Julia?'"

To be unknown in Anglo-Saxon England was to be uncouth, for the word comes direct from the Anglo-Saxon "uncuth," meaning "unknown."

One of the most delicately shaded of English puns (a pun on the word century), as well as one of the most explicit of dismissals of a book agent, belongs with the story of the great Century Dictionary, which is one of the three that do signal honor to American scholarship. To get the full flavor of the punning you must observe that the year is 1889—the nineteenth century with eleven years to run—and that Oliver Wendell Holmes, incorrigible punster always, is eighty years old. To the Century's persistent canvasser the doctor says:

"No, I'm too old—eighty years—I shan't live to see the Century finished."

The agent: "Nay, Doctor, you won't have to live so very much longer to use our book; we've already got to G."

The Doctor: "And you may go to ——l, if you like!"

Beautiful!—the double play on "century" and the final explosion on L with its implication of H. The agent vanished. Senator Carl Schurz and Charles Francis Adams entered the Autocrat's study a few minutes later. The doctor told them the story, and Mr. Adams told it to Holmes' biographer, John Morse.

All embracing dictionary! Inexhaustible source, if we examine the book with some gusto, of history, poetry, and stories.

"Aye," said a farmer, having looked into the dictionary, to Sir Walter Scott, "aye, the stories are pretty good—but unco' short."

## LIII

## DEFOE'S "LIFE AND STRANGE ADVENTURES OF ROBINSON CRUSOE"

(Parts I and II first published in 1719; Part III in 1720.)

*I have gone through a life of wonders, and am the subject of a great variety of providences. I have been fed more by miracles than Elijah when the ravens were his purveyors. In the school of affliction I have learned more philosophy than at the academy, and more divinity than from the pulpit. In prison I have learned that liberty does not consist in open doors and the egress and regress of locomotion. I have seen the rough side of the world as well as the smooth, and have in less than half a year tasted the difference between the closet of a king and the dungeon of Newgate.*

DANIEL DEFOE.

"I WELL remember a little scene which took place when I was a child of eight or nine. 'Robinson Crusoe' held me in his golden thrall, and I was expected to go to church. I hid beneath a bed with 'Robinson Crusoe,' and was in due course discovered by an elder sister and a governess, who, on my refusing to come out, resorted to force. Then followed a struggle that was quite Homeric. The two ladies tugged as best they might, but I clung to 'Crusoe' and the legs of the bed, and kicked till, perfectly exhausted, they took their departure in no very Christian frame of mind, leaving me panting indeed, but triumphant."

The man who, three and thirty years after that "quite Homeric struggle" thus remembered every detail of it was Master of the High Court in the Transvaal, a statement significant enough, but not so convincing as it becomes when you think of him as the author of "She" and "King Solomon's Mines." A craftsman, in other words, who would recognize a tale worth fighting for. Sir Henry Haggard he became in the latter part of his life, but as H. Rider Haggard he always is thought of.

Next to the pleasure of reading good literature is the pleasure of reading good things about good literature. Sometimes they,

too, become good literature—Hazlitt, Lamb, Leigh Hunt, De Quincey, the roll is long and illustrious—and then they are called criticism, good criticism being not carping but relishing discernment.

So let us continue briefly along those lines.

I am turning the pages of the journal kept for more than half a century by a scholar who, in the manner of Montaigne, made the odds and ends of his journal the basis of some of his greatest work. Under the year 1853, when the scholar was 50, comes this entry:

"The other day Henry Thoreau was speaking to me about my lecture on the Anglo-American, and regretting that whatever was written for a lecture, or whatever succeeded with the audience, was bad, etc. I said, 'I am ambitious to write something which all can read, like "Robinson Crusoe." And when I have written a paper or a book, I see with regret that it is not solid, with a right materialistic treatment which delights everybody.' Henry objected, of course. . . ."

The man thus wistfully ambitious to "write something that all can read, like 'Robinson Crusoe,'" was known on two continents then. His name was Emerson.

In the "Anecdotes" Mrs. Piozzi minds her of a time when another scholar, old then but only twenty-two when Defoe laid down his pen forever, sighed:

"Was there ever yet anything written by mere man that was wished longer by its readers, excepting 'Don Quixote,' 'Robinson Crusoe' and 'The Pilgrim's Progress'?"

Whom did "Robinsoe Crusoe" so entrance? A lexicographer, essayist, and moral philosopher, a testy, impatient, practical man whose name was Samuel Johnson.

He loathed his contemporary, Jean Jacques Rousseau, but they were at one in one matter—more, no doubt, but hate intervened and blurred. In Rousseau's "Émile," an epochal book about an imagined boy, though Jean Jacques was really writing of himself, the seed-caster of the French revolution said this:

"Since we must have books, this is one which, in my opinion, is a most excellent treatise on natural education. This is the first my Émile shall read; his whole library shall long consist of this work

only, which shall preserve an eminent rank to the very last. . . . It shall be our guide during our progress to maturity of judgment. . . . And what surprising book is this? Is it Aristotle, is it Pliny, is it Buffon? No; it is 'Robinson Crusoe.' The value and importance of the various arts are ordinarily estimated, not according to their real utility, but by the gratification which they administer to the fantastic desires of mankind. But . . . 'Robinson Crusoe' shall teach Émile to value the stock of an ironmonger above that of the most magnificent toy shop in Europe."

And so on and on and in and out amid the pleasant byways of literature for the two centuries and more during which Defoe's book has been the delight and wonder of philosophers and critics—and of boys hiding under beds.

From the first "Robinson Crusoe" was a best seller and such it is to-day. It was and remains the delight of schoolboys. It was and remains the admiration of scholars and the solace of old men. When they asked old Doctor Robertson, whom few read nowadays and are the poorer for it, how to form a good historical style, the historian of Charles V, whom even Prescott respected to the point of wholly accepting, replied, "Read Defoe."

Yes, a best seller from the start.

Part I of "Robinson Crusoe," the only part that is much read now, came out in April, 1719. Within four months four editions were sold, and, by August, Defoe had Part II ready for the booksellers. A year later came Part III, which is no tale at all, but a plump volume of moral essays on solitude, on honesty, on "immorality of conversation and the vulgar errors of behavior," and on "the present state of religion in the world." These essays were grouped under the title, "Serious Reflections of Robinson Crusoe." Part III is seldom reprinted now. Almost nobody knows of it, nobody can be said really to read it. It is nevertheless wise and solicitous, and an excellent little book of apothegms could be put together from it. It was called what it was called because the name Robinson Crusoe would make almost anything a best seller. And Defoe was growing old (59), was poor in fortune and, as a politician, utterly ruined.

Others seized upon the golden name. Forty years after the appearance of the original tale the spell still held, for in that

period forty-one different "Robinson Crusoes" had been written by imitators who traded on the title, and there were fifteen other imitations under other titles. So lately as 1898 a German named Ullrich—of course it would be a German—published at Weimar a handbook of all that lore, calling it "Robinson und Robinsonaden." Just as eloquent of the universal appeal of the story is the fact that the traveler Burckhardt found the men of the caravans reading it aloud from the Arabic "in the cool of the evening." 'Tis a picture that would have delighted Defoe—I do not mean his vanity but his sense of the value of a brief stroke of color. "In the cool of the evening"—he would have said it, and, saying so much, would have said no more. That was part of his spell—that marvelous artistry that seemed so artless. Perhaps it was artless; the proof of its perfection lies in the fact that men cannot tell.

You remember that time when, soon after he was cast upon his "Island of Despair," Crusoe first fired his weapon:

> "At my coming back, I shot at a great bird, which I saw sitting upon a tree, on the side of a great wood. I believe it was the first gun that had been fired there since the creation of the world."

Before that kind of thing a writing man lays down his arms. How plausible is the becommaed particularity as to the location of the "great bird," and how bold, how swift yet unhurried the descent of that matchless stroke—"I believe it was the first gun that had been fired there since the creation of the world." Aeons of time, solitude, strangeness, and the appalling remoteness into which Robinson has been cast, all are conveyed by means of an eighteen word commonplace of which all the words save two are one syllabled and all save one come to us by way of the Saxon.

Again, that episode of the plaintive calling by the parrot which Crusoe had trained to speak his name. It occurs about half way of Part I and at the end of the alarming attempt which the solitary made to circumnavigate his island. 'Twas in, he says, "the sixth year of my reign, or my captivity, which you please," and his tussle with the currents left him so exhausted that he slept for many hours the sleep of exhaustion in a part of the island remote from his "castle."

And then this:

" . . . But judge you, if you can, that read my story, what a surprise I must be in when I was waked out of my sleep by a voice calling me by name several times, 'Robin, Robin, Robin Crusoe, poor Robin Crusoe! Where are you, Robin Crusoe? Where are you? Where have you been?'

". . . but dozing between sleeping and waking, I thought I dreamed that somebody spoke to me . . . and was at first dreadfully frightened. . . . But no sooner were my eyes open but I saw my Poll sitting on the top of the hedge, and immediately knew that it was he that spoke to me; for just in such bemoaning language I had used to talk to him, and teach him; and he had learned it so perfectly, that he would sit upon my finger and lay his bill close to my face and cry, 'Poor Robin Crusoe! Where are you? Where have you been? How come you here?' and such things as I had taught him . . . the sociable creature came to me, and sat upon my thumb as he used to do . . . just as if he had been overjoyed to see me again; and so I carried him home along with me."

That is all.

Charles Dickens thought it curious that "Robinson Crusoe" should be the only instance of "a universally popular book that could make no one laugh and could make no one cry."

Well, truly, there is naught in this tale to make one blubber, but it seems to me that the incident of Poll and his fond calling, as well as Defoe's whole treatment of that incident, is, like many another thing in the book, very true pathos—the kind that a man who was all man would write—and true pathos is a difficult thing. There must be so much reticence in it. It must not seem to try. Wilton Lackaye once tartly indicated the difference between it and something else. "There is pathos," he said, "and there is puthos." Pathos never cloys and never grows stale. We age away from puthos.

Dickens complained, too, that Defoe made so little of the death of Friday, which comes in the sea fight between Crusoe's ship and the savages in Part II. He said it was unfeeling.

I am not so sure Defoe did not make enough of it when he made Crusoe take it as your forthright Englisher of the sea would take it:

"I was so enraged at the loss of my old trusty servant and companion that I immediately ordered five guns to be loaded with small shot and four with great, and gave them such a broadside as they had never heard in their lives before, to be sure."

So Friday went to heaven amid a salvo of nine guns. 'Twas creditable.

Then come a couple of pages to tell how the fight was won, and, that matter disposed of, Crusoe's farewell to the faithful man:

"And now I name the poor fellow once more, I must take my last leave of him. Poor honest Friday! We buried him with all the decency and solemnity possible, by putting him into a coffin and throwing him into the sea; and I caused them to fire eleven guns for him; and so ended the life of the most grateful, faithful, honest, and most affectionate servant that man ever had."

No man, no school of critics, will ever call that mawkish. Some of Mr. Dickens' obituary exercises have not fared so well. Two centuries have passed over Defoe's masterpiece, and it still is young with the eternal youth of truth. Mr. Dickens has been dead nearly sixty years, and many of his labored "effects" are as dead as that—because they were "effects." Even so, he paid Defoe one of the highest tributes his work ever received. Writing to Forster from France, he told him how he had been re-reading Defoe, and described the occupation as one of "my numerous refreshings at those English wells."

Deep is the well, and pure the draught therefrom. This book is, in a manner of speaking, one of three great books of soul-testing. One is about Prince Hamlet, the testing of whose soul extends through two and a half months; another is about Henry Faust, whose ordeal endures for fifty years, and, in "Robinson Crusoe," we are on the Island of Despair, thinking, contriving, arranging, governing, studying, planting, finding ourselves, realizing ourselves, for eight and twenty years. It is an epic of competent man—of man alone—all alone—refusing to starve, refusing to go mad, refusing to lose the power of speech; ever patient, ingenious, hoping on and on, not for rescue merely, but for the best as God shall order it, be it rescue or endless waiting, and at the last finding his own soul.

## LIV

## CARLYLE'S "THE FRENCH REVOLUTION," OR HISTORY BY FLASHES OF LIGHTNING

(First published in 1837)

*Honour to the strong man, in these ages, who has shaken himself loose of shams, and is something. For in the way of being worthy, the first condition surely is that one be. Let Cant cease, at all risks and at all costs; till Cant cease, nothing else can begin. Of human Criminals, in these centuries, writes the Moralist, I find but one unforgivable: the Quack. "Hateful to God," as divine Dante sings, "and to the Enemies of God."*

THOMAS CARLYLE.

("The French Revolution," Part II, Book III, Chapter VII.)

"My Jeannie, lass," said Thomas Carlyle to his much-enduring wife on a gray evening in 1837 when he had written the last paragraph of "The French Revolution"—the plaintive yet manly one beginning, "And so here, O Reader," and drawing to a close on the words, "Ill stands it with me if I have spoken falsely"—"my Jeannie, lass," said he, "what they will do with this book none knows; but they have not had, for a two hundred years, any book that came more truly from a man's very heart, and so let them trample it under foot and hoof as they see best!"

"Pooh, pooh!" answered Jeannie lass, "they cannot trample that!"

And so husband and wife started on their evening walk, he with "nervous system that had got dreadfully irritated and inflamed," but also "with her dear blessing on me." He was forty-two years old, and into the book he had crushed and hammered and burned the best of himself.

"Pooh, pooh! they cannot trample that!"

Nor could they. Ninety years have not brought another book like it.

For here are portraits in flame—endless portraits, etched not in acid alone but seeming, sometimes, dashed in with blood and fire. Here are a six year march and countermarch and rout and scurrying to cover and rallying again and threat of débâcle and windy promise of millennium. Here yeast fermenting, and bursting ancient vessels to pieces, and good wholesome bread, that some say shall be the bread of life to hungry-souled men, thrust into roaring ovens and coming out cinders that grit men's teeth and make them mad. No nourishment there at all; and the passing of the fourteen decades since the French revolution flamed up has not taught men the right way of that baking. But the product improves, many assert.

Here no book seeming written in a study, with an anxious wife shooing intrusion and distraction away from a genius-man in disorder—too much bile in him and excess of scorn for all neighbors. Seeming, rather, welded in a smithy. Hark to the clang of this—it is July 14, 1789—the Bastille is about to fall:

"On, then, all Frenchmen that have hearts in your bodies. Roar with all your throats, of cartilage and metal, ye Sons of Liberty; stir spasmodically whatsoever of utmost faculty is in you, soul, body, or spirit; for it is the hour! Smite, thou Louis Tournay, cartwright of the Marais, old-soldier of the Regiment Dauphiné; smite at that Outer Drawbridge chain, though the fiery hail whistles round thee! Never, over nave or felloe, did thy axe strike such a stroke. Down with it, man; down with it to Orcus; let the whole accursed Edifice sink thither, and Tyranny be swallowed up for ever! Mounted, some say, on the roof of the guardroom, some 'on bayonets stuck into joints of the wall,' Louis Tournay smites, brave Aubin Bonnemère (also an old soldier) seconding him: the chain yields, breaks; the huge Drawbridge slams down, thundering (*avec fracas*). Glorious: and yet, alas, it is still but the outworks. The Eight grim Towers, with their Invalide musketry, their paving stones and cannon-mouths, still soar aloft intact —Ditch yawning impassable, stone-faced; the inner Drawbridge with its *back* towards us: the Bastille is still to take."

And so on—rage lashing and roaring; fires breaking out; blood flowing—blood which, our storming chronicler interjects, is "the ailment of new madness"; "smoke as of Tophet," he cries; "confusion as of Babel; noise as of the Crack of Doom"; and the great Bastille Clock ticking there in its Inner Court, "at its ease,

hour after hour; as if nothing special, for it or the world, were passing."

That ticking of the Bastille Clock is as masterly as the knocking at the castle door in "Macbeth."

But on, on! through two more pages; "four hours now has the World-Bedlam roared." It sinks; there is a fluttering of white capitulation papers; a mighty rushing sound sweeps across the page; then a shout bursts from it—"Victoire! La Bastille est prise!"

And Chapter VI of Book V, Part I of Thomas Carlyle's "The French Revolution: A History" is finished.

This movement and this color, this sense of human-men, doing in the world the work of myth-men, of men from a quartier tearing the ages down, are sustained for a thousand pages. These humans rise to incredible heroisms, fall into an abject failure from which the world still suffers, fight all Europe, fight one another, mumbling the while like the mob in a play, "Kill—burn—destroy" (that is the routine lingo stage managers give their mobs), and, having mumbled itself into hysterics, this mob breaks loose from make-believe and *does* kill, burn and destroy in the bitter months of "the Terror," that year of '93, the numerals of which still chill the heart of reaction all over the world.

With those myth-men—because he was part myth-man, too—Carlyle screams and rages and tears down and feverishly tries building up. With them he weeps, echoes also their mocking laughter, whirls in their Carmagnole—frantic dance embracing exultation with the arm of doom—and sometimes, withdrawing himself quite away from them and their wrath, keeps the vigil of reverence and pity, as when "the white vision of the Revolution" mounts the scaffold. Here, with us, is he. Aloft, there, is she—Mme. Roland:

" . . . Looking at the Statue of Liberty which stands there, she says bitterly: 'O Liberty, what things are done in thy name!'

"Noble white Vision, with its high queenly face, its soft proud eyes, long black hair flowing down to the girdle; and as brave a heart as ever beat in woman's bosom! Like a White Grecian Statue, serenely complete, she shines in that black wreck of things;—long memorable. Honor to great Nature, who, in Paris City, in the Era of Noble-

Sentiment and Pompadourism, can make a Jeanne Phlipon, and nourish her to clear perennial Womanhood, though but on Logics, *Encyclopedies,* and the Gospel according to Jean-Jacques! Biography will long remember that trait of asking for a pen 'to write the strange thoughts that were rising in her.' It is a little light-beam, shedding softness, and a kind of sacredness, over all that preceded; so in her too there was an Unnamable; she too was a Daughter of the Infinite; there were mysteries which Philosophism had not dreamt of!—She left long written counsels to her little Girl; she said her husband would not survive her."

He has a style for dirges and a style for delirium. Neither ever fails him, and so never wearies us; or, if we are aweary, it is with the weariness of high excitement. From the pen of any other man, these tumultuous flights, these gaspings, starts, recoils, outcries, and these commands that we "Look there!" "Look here!" "Halt!" "Wait!" "Onward now!"—these would run into tedious clamor. But he sustains. He dares every antic of expression—unreasoned hyphens, multitudinous dashes, endless exclamations that make an actual noise ("shouts" is what printers call exclamation points, and Carlyle's are that), phrases from foreign tongues, almost wholly disused words like "elsewhither," sentences which, neither beginning nor ending, are thrust at you like blows. But there is music in them. Unearthly strains sometimes, and sometimes they march to drum-beats and end on bugle blasts. They creak and groan with the rumble of the huge coach which, to the doom of all riding therein, had dressing cases fitted into it—the coach in flight to Varennes, with a vain woman and a stupid man and innocent children in it. Carlyle's story of the flight is as good as the one Dumas told. We toil through night and apprehension with it. We are afraid.

This kind of writing grips men while it drives them nearly distracted. Sir William Hamilton, one of the wisest men that ever lived, took up the book, when it was new, at 3 o'clock in the afternoon. When he laid it down the clock was striking 4 of the next morning. The secret of the spell is in the unflagging vivacity of the style. That style gave a name to calculated incoherence in writing. It is called Carlyleëse. George Gilfillan, Carlyle's compatriot and a safe critic, said that "its very faults.

like scars on the face of a warrior, contribute to rivet your attention."

It is a book written as nobody else would have written it, which is one token of a masterpiece. It is more. It is a book written as nobody else could have written it. And that is the decisive token, carrying with it all the others. It is not a book. It is a pageantry of excitements, woes, high eloquence, abysmal tragedies.

And the portraits! In other books about the demigods and demagogues of the Revolution it is like seeing great men from a seat in the strangers' gallery of a hall of legislation, or seeing them on the hustings, or when they ride clanking by at the head of their troops, inscrutable, stuffed with importance, aloof. That is to see them. But in this book you *meet* them.

Who is this who comes cautiously, sanely, unfeelingly peering out of Chapter II of the last Book of this history? A little man whom few know and of whom fewer take account. But mark him well. In a few more pages he will release a certain "whiff of grapeshot" that will quiet and reduce and set in order for twenty years—no more—the most audacious experiment and the most appalling muddle in which mankind ever engaged itself. Mark him in '94. He has some months to wait; '95 is going to be his year. He is Napoleon Bonaparte:

"... that little bronze-complexioned Artillery-Officer of Toulon, home from the Italian Wars! Grim enough; of lean, almost cruel aspect: for he has been in trouble, in ill health; also in ill favor, as a man promoted, deservingly or not, by the Terrorists and Robespierre Junior. But does not Barras know him? Will not Barras speak a word for him? Yes,—if at any time it will serve Barras so to do. Somewhat forlorn of fortune, for the present, stands the Artillery-Officer; looks, with those deep earnest eyes of his, into a future as waste as the most Taciturn; yet with the strangest utterances in him, if you awaken him, which smite home, like light or lightning;—on the whole, rather dangerous? A 'dissocial' man? Dissocial enough; a natural terror and horror to all Phantasms, being himself of the genus Reality! He stands here, without work or outlook, in this forsaken manner;—glances nevertheless, it would seem, at the kind glance of Josephine Beauharnais; and, for the rest, with severe countenance, with open eyes, and closed lips, waits what will betide."

In like manner, so intimately that there seems at times a kind of furtiveness in the arrangement which has brought you and the demigods and demagogues face to face and eye to eye, you shall meet Mirabeau (probably the greatest portrait in the book), Robespierre, Danton, Dumouriez (an exquisite etching less than a little page wide and long), dear Vergniaud, and the long train of others who made and unmade the destiny of a continent. Had they never lived and wrought, Europe would still be feudal. They having lived and wrought, it is less so.

The very chapter headings of this book invite to reading: "Storm and Victory"; "Conquering Your King"; "O Richard, O My King!"; "As in the Age of Gold"; "Sound and Smoke"; "The Day of Poniards"; "The Night of Spurs"; "The Steeples at Midnight"; "The Gods Are Athirst"; "Grilled Herrings"; "The Whiff of Grapeshot." Who can resist?

It is, however, no kindness to urge this book upon a youth or a novice and expect him to manage it singlehanded. It is so great a book that one would not have it different, but one would have another book to read with it. Carlyle presupposes so much knowledge in his reader, is so allusive, interjectory, rhapsodic, and he dashes in and out of his narrative so often and so wildly, that he bewilders and baffles the young reader. So, if you are young and will let yourself be schoolmastered for a moment, get Justin Huntley McCarthy's "The French Revolution," a longer book than Carlyle's by three or four hundred pages, but clearer, easier, and more comprehensive. A good working edition may be had for $3.50. If you are in school, persuade your school to undertake the purchase of the new "French Revolution" which Dr. George H. Allen, one of the government's historiographers of the world war, is writing, and which the Barries of Philadelphia are publishing in four volumes. It is expensive, but, if only for its pictorial splendors and its reproductions of documents, it is worth while. It ought to be in every school. I have studied only the first two volumes. They are lucid and interesting.

Work your way into a great period, with McCarthy and Dr. Allen for a month or two, and then you will enjoy your Carlyle with an ardor which few other books in our language can impart.

## LV

## DANA'S "TWO YEARS BEFORE THE MAST"

(First published in 1840)

*London, June 20th, 1847.*

*My Dear Uncle and Aunt: On the 19th, Saturday, we breakfasted with Lady Byron and my friend, Miss Murray, at Mr. Rogers'. He and Lady Byron had not met for many, many years, and their renewal of old friendship was very interesting to witness. Mr. Rogers told me that he first introduced her to Lord Byron. After breakfast he had been repeating some lines of poetry which he thought fine, when suddenly he exclaimed: "But there is a bit of American* PROSE *which, I think, has more poetry in it than almost any modern verse." He then repeated, I should think more than a page from Dana's "Two Years Before the Mast," describing the falling overboard of one of the crew, and the effect it produced, not only at the moment, but for some time afterward. I wondered at his memory, which enabled him to recite so beautifully a long prose passage, so much more difficult than verse. Several of those present with whom the book was a favorite were so glad to hear from me that it was as* TRUE *as interesting, for they had regarded it as partly a work of imagination.*

(From Mrs. George Bancroft's "Letters from England.")

THAT letter is an interesting document from several points of view.

"Two Years Before the Mast: A Personal Narrative," had been seven years before the public when Mrs. Bancroft wrote of it. She was the wife of the eminent historian of our country, who then was President Polk's minister to England. Samuel Rogers, the poet who linked the age of Johnson—as a youth he had knocked at the doctor's door and run away affrighted before the lexicographer could answer—with the age of Tennyson, was eighty-four years old when he performed the feat in mnemonics which Mrs. Bancroft narrates—a feat remarkable, surely, for a man in his prime and astounding for one of the banker-poet's age.

The "bit of American prose," which he thought had "more poetry in it than almost any modern verse," captivated him, mani-

festly, by the combined robustness, chasteness, and simplicity of its style. The marvel is that it was the style of a struggling young Boston lawyer, under twenty-five years of age, who never had written anything notable before, and who, though he lived to be sixty-six years old, produced in "Two Years Before the Mast" his only celebrated though not his only good work.

The passage Rogers loved fills an octavo page in the affecting Chapter VI which begins: "This was a black day in our calendar," and it moves thus—quiet, vivid, seeming effortless, yet very poignant:

"Death is at all times solemn, but never so much as at sea. A man dies on shore; his body remains with his friends, and 'the mourners go about the streets'; but when a man falls overboard at sea and is lost there is a suddenness in the event, and a difficulty in realizing it, which give to it an air of awful mystery. A man dies on shore—you follow his body to the grave, and a stone marks the spot. You are often prepared for the event. There is always something which helps you to realize it when it happens, and to recall it when it has passed. A man is shot down by your side in battle, and the mangled body remains an object, and a real evidence; but at sea, the man is near you —at your side—you hear his voice, and in an instant he is gone, and nothing but a vacancy shows his loss. Then, too, at sea—to use a homely but expressive phrase—you *miss* a man so much. A dozen men are shut up together in a little bark upon the wide, wide sea, and for months and months see no forms and hear no voices but their own, and one is taken suddenly from among them, and they miss him at every turn. It is like losing a limb. There are no new faces or new scenes to fill up the gap. There is always an empty berth in the forecastle, and one man wanting when the small nightwatch is mustered. There is one less to take the wheel, and one less to lay out with you upon the yard. You miss his form and the sound of his voice, for habit had made them almost necessary to you, and each of your senses feels the loss."

Dana went on to tell how, after such an episode on a merchant vessel, the oath and the loud laugh for a little while are silenced; how the officers are kinder and more watchful, and the crew go more carefully aloft; how the lost man is seldom mentioned or is dismissed with a sailor's rude eulogy, "Well, poor George is gone! His cruise is up soon! He knew his work, and did his duty, and was a good shipmate." Then this:

"Then usually follows some allusion to another world, for sailors are almost all believers, in their way; though their notions and opinions are unfixed and at loose ends. They say, 'God won't be hard upon the poor fellow,' and seldom get beyond the common phrase which seems to imply that their sufferings and hard treatment here will be passed to their credit in the books of the Great Captain hereafter, —'To work hard, live hard, die hard, and go to hell after all, would be hard indeed!' "

That style, steady with sense and composure, yet uttering deep, honest feeling, has been the delight of men of letters from Rogers and Moore and Brougham and Bulwer and Dickens to Carl Van Doren. Like Defoe's style, with which it often is not compared but mentioned, it is inimitable, for the effort to imitate it produces only feeble echoes. But it teaches lessons—lessons in what not to do. If I were a rich newspaper publisher, I would circulate this book from year to year among the staff—make the reading and rereading of it a kind of earnest of the right to promotion—and then die balked of my desire; for newspaper men little like to be schoolmastered.

When Dickens came to America in 1842, young Richard Henry Dana, Jr., was one of the few men he really wished to meet. The reason was that "Two Years Before the Mast" was a book which John Forster had praised much to him, thinking it "like Defoe." Donald Grant Mitchell felt the Defoe spell, too, and spoke in his engaging book, "American Lands and Letters," of "those vivid Defoe-like sketches of 'Two Years Before the Mast.' " In our time Mr. Van Doren calls it "that incomparable classic of the sea" and gives it the adjectives "crisp and nautical." But "crisp" conveys only part of the charm.

Dickens did meet Dana—had to send for him because the younger man would not go a-chasing notables—and described him to Forster as "a very nice fellow, indeed; and in appearance not at all the man you would expect—short, mild-looking, and has a care-worn face."

You get a hint of what may have been one source of the young man's mature artistic and moral power from that "care-worn face."

Beneath the "crispness" which Mr. Van Doren likes in Dana,

the readiness—he was very brave—the unpretentiousness and the ease, there was a strain of gravity and tendency to reverie which, if it was not mournful, was pensive, dreamy, and of a texture so delicate that no lover of literature can cease to lament the fact that a man of gifts so subtle gave his life to admiralty law and political reform instead of to letters.

Take the passage which comes two-thirds of the way through Chapter XXXIII. He is describing a calm night in tropic waters—the quietness of it—"the sea still as an inland lake"—"the light trade-wind gently and steadily breathing from astern"—and the young sailor lying out on the flying-jib-boom, whence he could look at the *Alert* as at a separate vessel and drink in the beauty of a ship under full sail, a beauty, he says, very few have ever beheld, and he tells why. A ship with "all her sail upon her" he calls "the most glorious moving object in the world," and drifts into a page of description of a kind that is so fraught with the peril of boredom that the best disposed of readers usually skips it. But Dana's page you read with breathlessness, and you move with him into this beautiful serenity:

"So quiet, too, was the sea, and so steady the breeze, that if these sails had been sculptured marble they could not have been more motionless. Not a ripple upon the surface of the canvas; not even a quivering of the extreme edges of the sail, so perfectly were they distended by the breeze. I was so lost in the sight that I forgot the presence of the man who came out with me, until he said (for he, too, rough old man-of-war's-man as he was, had been gazing at the show), half to himself, still looking at the marble sails, 'How quietly they do their work!'"

That is what the music makers call a *morendo* passage—softer and softer—then dying away till nothing intervenes 'twixt it and silence—although it is still sounding in the ears.

While I was transcribing the *morendo,* one of the executives of the Chicago *Tribune* paused at my desk to pass the time of night—not that he was at the moment wrapped in solicitude for me, but because the pause made a breathing space in one of his badgered hours. "Rob," said I, "read that"—and pointed to the passage. He ran his eye down it—slowly and more slowly, then replaced

the book on the desk, saying, "Ah, that quiets the whole night!"

That is criticism of a precious kind because in half a dozen words it describes the effect created.

"Two Years Before the Mast" had its origin in an attack of eye trouble and a vow.

In 1834, when Dana was a Harvard junior, he had the measles, and that illness left him with eyes so weakened that reading caused sharp pain. He was then eighteen years old. His father's income did not permit luxurious recuperation. There was an invitation to go out as a gentleman passenger on a Boston merchantman bound to India. The boy declined it, not believing that such traveling would be either long enough or manful enough to effect a cure. So he shipped as common sailor on the brig *Pilgrim,* bound for California (then a province of Mexico) with a cargo of everything from wagon wheels to haberdashery and scheduled to return in two years with hides. The *Pilgrim* sailed via Cape Horn. Dana returned in the *Alert.* The cure was complete and Richard Henry Dana lived a long and useful life.

The present generation's interest in the bold experiment lies in the book of not travel but of human nature that came of it. Dana wrote of sailors as they lived and suffered and rejoiced, and he did it with sympathy and vividness, because for two robust years he lived and suffered and rejoiced with them.

This scion of the old Brahmin stock of Boston, this Harvardian who could trace his descent, in common with Oliver Wendell Holmes, from America's first poetess, Anne Bradstreet, whose forbears had been jurists and statesmen and whose father (Dana of "The Buccaneers") was a rare poet and one of the founders of the *North American Review*—in the year of whose founding, 1815, the son was born—this lad, who might so easily have been a self-satisfied, self-conscious prig, sailed with sailormen and made himself one of them, never making the mistake of either play-acting fleeting abasement or of inflicting patronage. Years after the voyage which his book had made Homeric those humble men would send for him when they were in trouble or were dying, and if they tried then to call him "Mister Dana" he soon stopped that. He was a man.

The voyage, and in especial the collecting of hides along the coast by San Pedro—the present port for Los Angeles—developed bad, bitter deeds. The captain, Frank Thompson, was subject to maniacal attacks of rage, which he did not curb because he did not have to. He was a vicious brute but, for those who love to take apart vivid language and examine the springs of its power, he had one dazzling excellence. He was an artist in vituperation. In the second chapter of this volume we examined a specimen of Long John Silver's proficiency in the use of high language. Frank Thompson's releases had less of the true artist's reticence than those of Stevenson's sea-cook had. Thompson had recourse to profanity, which Silver never permitted himself—but in the following flight Thompson is, saving the oaths, perfect master of his art:

"Away with you! Go forward, every one of you! I'll *haze* you! I'll work you up! You don't have enough to do! If you a'n't careful I'll make a hell of heaven! . . . You've mistaken your man! I'm Frank Thompson, all the way from 'down east.' I've been through the mill, ground and bolted, and come out a *regular-built down-east johnny-cake;* when it's hot, d——d good, but when it's cold d——d sour and indigestible; and you'll find me so!"

During one of Thompson's explosions, young Dana saw him cruelly beat two guiltless, helpless sailors.

It was then that the vow was made. This was the setting:

"After the day's work was done we went down into the forecastle and ate our plain supper; but not a word was spoken. It was Saturday night; but there was no song—no 'Sweethearts and Wives.' A gloom was over everything. The two men lay in their berths, groaning with pain, and we all turned in, but, for myself, not to sleep. A sound coming now and then from the berths of the two men showed that they were awake, as awake they must have been, for they could hardly lie in one posture long; the dim, swinging lamp shed its light over the dark hole in which we lived, and many and various reflections and purposes coursed through my mind. I had no apprehension that the captain would try to lay a hand on me; but our situation, living under a tyranny, with an ungoverned, swaggering fellow administering it; of the character of the country we were in; the length of the voyage; the uncertainty attending our return to America; and then, if we should return, the prospect of obtaining justice and satisfaction

for these poor men; and I vowed that, if God should ever give me the means, I would do something to redress the grievances and relieve the sufferings of that class of beings with whom my lot had so long been cast."

The vow was amply fulfilled—not by the tedious device of a book of protest or of propaganda, but by a hearty, loving, merciful book that stirred the sympathy of men by first stirring their imagination and by making them feel and respect the ties of brotherhood which men, if they are men, do feel and respect—yea, revere. The state of sailormen all over the world is better to-day because eighty-seven years ago "Two Years Before the Mast" was written. The good work goes on. Since 1840 more than fifty editions, bearing the imprints of more than thirty publishers in America and Europe, have appeared. In 1911 came the illustrated edition published by the Houghton Mifflin company, with introduction, supplementary chapter, and invaluable appendices by the honored Richard Henry Dana III, son of our author.

That is the edition you want. If you have it not you will not count wasted the day a poor old landsman told you of it.

## LVI

## BUNYAN'S "PILGRIM'S PROGRESS," OR HOW TO FORM A STYLE

(Part I first published in 1678; Part II in 1684)

*I am reading old Bunyan again, after the long lapse of years, and am profoundly struck with the true genius manifested in the simple, vigorous, rhythmic style.*

(*Journal*, November 25, 1859.) GEORGE ELIOT.

*I am glad Tom [Macaulay] has revived old John Bunyan. Many are reading it who never read it before. Yesterday, as he was sitting in the Athenaeum, a gentleman called out, "Waiter, is there a copy of 'The Pilgrim's Progress' in the library?" As might be expected, there was not.*

(*Journal*, January 3, 1832.) MARGARET MACAULAY.

ALL last week I was living under the witchery of Bunyan's style. And so it comes to pass that now a very humble putter-together of words sits himself down to try to impart the wonder of that style.

Could you, could any of us, write a thousand words that should combine description and satire and humor and reverie and admonition, all in the most compact and sturdy yet most ingratiatingly shaded sentences—could we do that, I say, and still hold ourselves for sentence after sentence to words which would be readily understood by a child of five or six years and which would also be eloquent to the digger of ditches, or the hand on the remote farm, or the foreign man just beginning to get forward in our English tongue?

Here are a dozen lines of from a dozen to fifteen words each. They are from the short life of Bunyan as written by himself. In them I find but one word—"calamities"—that would baffle a child. Bunyan is telling of the anguish of mind he underwent when the choice yet remained to him whether to linger in prison

or, by conforming to the laws of the land in the matter of his church-going and his preaching, to go forth a free man—

" . . . the parting with my wife and poor children hath often been to me, in this place, as the pulling the flesh from the bones, and that, not only because I am somewhat too fond of these great mercies, but also because I should have often brought to my mind the many hardships, miseries, and wants, that my poor family was like to meet with, should I be taken from them; especially my poor blind child, who lay nearer to my heart than all beside. O! the thoughts of the hardship I thought my poor blind child might go under would break my heart to pieces! Poor child! thought I, what sorrow art thou like to have for thy portion in this world! Thou must be beaten, must beg, suffer hunger, cold, nakedness, and a thousand calamities, though I cannot now endure the wind to blow upon thee. But yet, recalling myself, thought I, I must venture you all with God, though it goeth to the quick to leave you. O! I saw in this condition I was as a man who was pulling his house upon the head of his wife and children; yet, thought I, I must do it, I must do it."

All of us have suffered; all of us have been in deep perplexity. But few of us, I believe, have ever tried, in the retrospect of grief, to set down on paper the march and battle and countermarch of the emotions that traversed and searched out our souls without laying the result aside with sick distaste. What was not excessive was ineffectual; what was meant to be poignant was only labored and self-conscious instead of self-revealing. It would not do. But Bunyan compassed the most poignant self-revelation with the expedients of a nursery tale. What command of speech that conveys at once wildness and determination he displays in the scant dozen words—and four of them a repetition —at the end of the passage we just read! Who can read them without lowering the voice?

*"Yet, thought I, I must do it, I must do it."*

As he lay in prison other thoughts shook his soul. The first great decision had been made. He had determined neither to recant nor to subside. Death might be the issue, but he would stand fast. Ah, but suppose he should not stand fast? Suppose he "should either with quaking or other symptoms of fainting, give occasion to the enemy to reproach the way of God, and his people

for their timorousness." He withholds from us the confession of not one pang that affrighted him; he wrings the pitiless truth from himself about himself. It was "a pretty business," he begins dryly—ah, but the finale, that is magnificent!

"I will tell you a pretty business: I was once, above all the rest, in a very sad and low condition for many weeks: at which time also, being but a young prisoner, and not acquainted with the laws, I had this lying upon my spirits, that my imprisonment might end at the gallows, for aught that I could tell: now, therefore, Satan laid hard at me, to beat me out of heart, by suggesting thus unto me. . . . Thus was I tossed for many weeks, and knew not what to do; at last, this consideration fell with weight upon me, That it was for the word and way of God that I was in this condition; wherefore, I was engaged to flinch not a hair's breadth from it. I thought, also, that God might choose whether he would give me comfort now, or at the hour of death; but I might not, therefore, choose whether I would hold my profession or no; I was bound, but he was free; . . . if God doth not come in, thought I, I will leap off the ladder, even blindfold into eternity, sink or swim, come heaven, come hell: Lord Jesus, if thou wilt catch me, do; if not, I will venture for thy name. Now was my heart full of comfort, for I hoped it was sincere."

"Sink or swim, come heaven, come hell: Lord Jesus, if thou wilt catch me, do; if not, I will venture for thy name."

Bravo, John!

And then that sedate touch, so softly taking all the clamor out of that heaven-challenging pledge to himself and to his maker:

*"Now was my heart full of comfort, for I hoped it was sincere."*

And so reading with a kind of awe Bunyan the self-revealer I turned to Bunyan the allegorist, the admonisher, the teller of the hard trials and the harder self-disciplines of our faring through this world, the Bunyan of "So I awoke, and behold it was a dream," the Bunyan of the book that, next to the Bible, has been for two centuries and a half the best seller in our language, the Bunyan of "The Pilgrim's Progress from This World to That Which Is to Come," the book which, if ever you go to his town of Bedford in the Midlands, you may see there in versions in more than eighty languages and dialects.

And thus turning I found in that little book the same witchery

of style, the same simplicity which still can produce effects so tremendous that they stun, the same passionate sincerity that makes you whisper as you read, "Here was a man!"

Thus balancing the man's life with his life work, we shall come into the secret of his style and shall find it to be no miracle after all, but a simple matter that we, too, could compass. All we have to do is to master one or two great books—so master them that they become incorporate with us but still crowd not out the speech we learned as children before sophistication cheapened our talk or disillusion envenomed it. (In Bunyan's case the two books were the Bible and Foxe's "Book of Martyrs.") Along with study of these books we must follow some humble essential trade (Bunyan's was pot mending) that shall bring us in touch with different kinds of folk all over the shire.

As time passes we must undergo great spiritual stress and bafflement about God and our duty to him, and about the reasons for our tarrying here on earth and what boots it that we do tarry. And in settling these matters for ourselves we must come into conflict with powerful and intrenched groups of men who are convinced that they are divinely appointed to settle these matters of the spirit for us. The upshot of our conflict must be that we are sentenced at the age of thirty-two to spend more than twelve years in prison for conscience's sake and that we do duly and decorously work out that sentence, making tagged shoe laces the while to help support our family on the outside, and devoting the other hours to the Bible and to good works among the other prisoners.

It must be a seventeenth century jail in England wherein we spend those twelve years of manual work and of reading, and, preliminary to them, we must have taken a turn at soldiering—under Cromwell—in a war that was fought for conscience's sake. (This soldiering part seems almost essential to the making of a certain type of sinewy writers, for Thucydides and Æschylus and Horace and Ben Jonson underwent it, too.)

Thus may we become great writers. The training is long and fraught with a certain tedium, but the end is immortality and a style so alive that it seems to walk across the page, so simple

that a child gives heed to the sagacious parable and the old man ponders and nods and says, "Even so!—even so!" Go with Christian when the Interpreter takes him by the hand:

"I saw, moreover, in my dream, that the Interpreter took him by the hand, and had him into a little room, where sat two little children, each one in his chair. The name of the eldest was Passion, and the name of the other Patience. Passion seemed to be much discontented, but Patience was very quiet. Then Christian asked, What is the reason of the discontent of Passion? The Interpreter answered, The governor of them would have him stay for his best things till the beginning of the next year; but he will have all now. But Patience is willing to wait. Then I saw that one came to Passion and brought him a bag of treasure and poured it down at his feet: the which he took up and rejoiced therein, and withal laughed Patience to scorn. But I beheld but a while, and he had lavished all away, and had nothing left him but rags."

I have said that the style of "The Pilgrim's Progress" is so alive, so unincumbered despite the copiousness of the imagery it conveys, that the words seem to walk across the page. And sometimes I think they smile up at you—as here:

"Thus they discoursed together till late at night, and after they had committed themselves to their Lord for protection, they betook themselves to rest. The Pilgrim they laid in a large upper chamber, whose window opened towards the sun rising; the name of the chamber was Peace, where he slept till break of day; and then he awoke and sang."

That style, fluent, winning, softly touched with color, conquering the heart with brief and gentle strokes, has been the despair of men whose writings are the adornment of our language. That is no idle statement.

The list of great men who have delighted to bring their tribute to this tinker, this field-preacher who had but two books, reads like the roll of a nation's academy of immortals—Samuel Johnson, Samuel Coleridge, Henry Hallam, Robert Southey (poet laureate when he wrote Bunyan's life), Lord Macaulay (who wrote two loving essays about the man, one of which you will find in your Encyclopædia Britannica), James Anthony Froude (whose life of Bunyan is almost the best brief biography in the English language), Charles Kingsley, Thomas Carlyle, Canon Venables

(who wrote another good life of Bunyan), Robert Louis Stevenson (whose essay on Bunyan and the Bagster prints is charming and whose phrase about Bunyan's style—"homespun yet impassioned"—is a masterstroke of compact criticism), Nathaniel Hawthorne (who said that Spenser's "Faerie Queene" and "The Pilgrim's Progress" were the two great awakening books in the history of his imagination), Walter Besant (who declared the book to be the principal imagination seizer and awakener in the development of his culture), John Richard Green, the historian, and the great Taine, who, writing in the most beautiful language in the world for nuances—I mean the world of living men—still found the style of John Bunyan one of the miracles of human speech.

There is a point to remember when we set out to acquire this style. It is a detail. I forgot to mention it. We must write our book in prison—that same county jail of the seventeenth century in the English Midlands—during our *second* imprisonment.

## LVII

## VICTOR HUGO'S "LES MISÉRABLES"

(First published in 1862)

*After a night at Bareme, the Emperor descended to the valley of the Bleone, where it grudgingly widens barely enough to accommodate the picturesque old provincial capital of the department of the Basses Alpes. There, at Digne, he found a welcoming friend in the bishop, who was a brother of General Miollis and who was only a poor curé when, at the General's request, Napoleon had elevated him to the bishopric.*

*The bishop sleeps now behind the high altar of his cathedral at Digne; but he lives in the saintly character of Monsigneur Bienvenu in "Les Misérables." For it was upon a kindness of the bishop of Digne toward a man who had tried to rob him that Victor Hugo built the character of Jean Valjean.*

*After rescuing the thief from crime, the curé sent him to serve in Egypt under his brother, General Miollis. According to the local legend, the veteran was in Digne again when Napoleon came along on his march from exile and he followed the Emperor to Paris and to Waterloo, where he perished on the field. Jean Valjean therefore will have to be enrolled as one of the four recruits whom history records as having rallied to the imperial eagles in the course of the first five days of the march.*

JAMES MORGAN.

("In the Footsteps of Napoleon," Chapter XLVII, "The Return from Elba.")

In a troubled and troubling world a solid fact abides: All the lasting good that has been accomplished in all the ages of recorded time has been accomplished by love and by education, which is the patient handmaiden of love.

Fact the most practical and the most nearly divine in human experience! To many it is disconcerting fact, and they deny it; to a few it is a religion, and they live for it. Sometimes they die for it.

Within the time of old men still living the book which has most

vividly reaffirmed the fact of the potency of love and education, and which has borne it in on hearts the humblest and upon minds the most capacious, is Victor Hugo's "Les Misérables."

In a day this book flew over the world. The statement is not flamboyant; it is literal.

On that day—April 3, 1862—"Les Misérables" was published in whole or in part in Paris, Brussels, London, Madrid, Rotterdam, Leipzig, Buda-Pesth, Warsaw, and Rio de Janeiro.

Within twenty-four hours the first Paris edition of 7,000 copies was sold out.

The French traveler Alfred Rambaud came upon the Russian translation "in the depths of Tartar Muscovy."

It was translated into Japanese and, most outspoken and clamorous of books, it still circulates largely among the most reticent of peoples.

It went into armies. Most pacifistic of documents, it was read and adored—the word is not o'er vehement—in a country convulsed by civil war. It was read and adored in armies that were at each other's throats. The heavily burdened soldier added two more pounds to his troubles—and to his solace—by thrusting the thousand-page volume into his knapsack. For the Union troops of our country a special edition called "the Volunteers' Edition" was printed; the troops of the Confederacy in the bitter hours of retreat and rout discarded much but every man hesitated before he dropped by the roadside his new gospel book. To the pronunciation of its title he had given a twist at once comic and poignant, and for a long time after the Civil War a stock joke—much relished by persons sufficiently tutored to have mastered the pronunciation of the French definite article—was that men who were fighting losing battles in a cause already lost emphatically Englished the words Les Misérables into Lee's miserables.

I have myself encountered this book in a prison; encountered there also, in sunny conversation, the pathetic Don Quixote of our time and country—only he did not know that he was pathetic—who said, "Among all books, it has meant more and done most for me." Such words, to be of value, require validation out of the speaker's experience. Eugene Debs' validation was certain

lines he had written in prison. With the smile which was the tenderest I ever saw on the face of man he repeated them:

"Beyond these bars
I see the stars;
God's glittering heralds beckon me,
My soul is winged: Behold! I'm free."

By one of the most delicate coincidences in my experience, the volume on a fly leaf of which Quixote later wrote out those lines for me was a copy of Charles Kingsley's "Alton Locke."

What, then, is the essence of this book that, singing, winged its way around the world, that touched with equal solace the souls of opposing armies, that became sometimes the gospeler of wild revolt and sometimes the sober text book of left-wing parties, that set state prisoners to writing hymns, and that—for the sure token of masterpieces is the universality of their appeal—is among the half dozen favorite romances of boyhood?

The book's credo is in these lines from it:

"So long as ignorance and misery remain upon the earth, so long will books of this kind be demanded. . . . Destroy the cave, Ignorance, and you destroy the mole, Crime. . . . The sole social evil is darkness; humanity is one, for all men are of the same clay, and in this nether world, at least, there is no difference in predestination; we are the same shadow before, the same flesh during, and the same ashes afterward. But ignorance, mixed with human paste, blackens it, and this incurable blackness enters man and there becomes Evil."

In a letter to Paul Foucher, written a year before "Les Misérables" was published, Victor Hugo defined the scope of his impending book with characteristic grandiloquence:

"The entire work revolves around one central character. It is a kind of planetary system moving around a giant soul, which is an incarnation of all the social misery of the time."

What had happened to that soul which Victor Hugo made incarnate of "all the social misery of the time"? When we read what had happened we ought to consider that in this colossal book—in easily readable type it runs to five pages less than 2,000—not men but man-administered institutions are arraigned.

Hugo's preachment is that a convenience so essential as man-administered institutions has become a source of fearful peril and wrong, because by distributing responsibility, those institutions have weakened, and in some cases destroyed, the individual's sense of responsibility. The convenient arrangement of man-administered institutions has become so wickedly convenient as to amount to a conspiracy by evaders.

Such a moment of evasion is bitten into the reader's consciousness early in the tale. Turn to the sixth chapter of the second book of "Les Misérables"—the chapter entitled "Jean Valjean." You will find this:

"There are in our civilization formidable moments; they are those in which penal justice decrees a shipwreck. What a mournful moment is that in which society withdraws, and consummates the irreparable abandonment of a thinking being! Jean Valjean was sentenced to five years at the galleys."

The highly institutionalized convenience having, with a minimum of bother to the mass of individuals, briskly consummated "the irreparable abandonment of a thinking being," Victor Hugo thinks it fitting that we should take account of what the individual affected by the operations of the responsibility-distributing machine thought of the machine. His views—Jean Valjean's—are imparted in the seventh chapter of the second book of "Les Misérables"—a chapter entitled "A Desperate Man's Heart." In reading that chapter it is important to remember that Jean Valjean's five years at the galleys have now become nineteen as a result of attempts to escape. The period has been ample for him to reach certain conclusions:

"He declared that there was no equilibrium between the harm he had done and the harm done him; and he came to the conclusion that his punishment was not unjust, but most assuredly iniquitous. Wrath may be wild and absurd; a man may be wrongfully irritated; but he is only indignant when he has some show of reason somewhere. Jean Valjean felt indignant. And then again, human society had never done him aught but harm; he had only seen its wrathful face, which is called its justice, and which it shows to those whom it strikes. . . . From suffering after suffering, he gradually attained to the conviction that life was war and that in this war he was the vanquished. As

he had no weapon but his hatred, he resolved to sharpen it in the galleys and to take it with him when he left."

There come, four pages further on, two sentences of Victor Hugo at his best; two short sentences that he makes to strike upon the mind like blows. He still is preoccupied with that Jean Valjean with whom society had closed its account nineteen years before. Victor Hugo is disturbed by his gaze:

*"To look at him, he seemed engaged in continually gazing at something terrible. He was, in fact, absorbed."*

The arraignment unfolded, there moves now out of the mournful thesis on which the story is founded, a vast pageantry of woe that is flashed through and through with light.

You know the early episode which gives the command "Advance!" to this pageant—the episode of the gift of the candlesticks to Valjean by the bishop whom his flock, making fond word-play with part of his name, were wont to call Milord Welcome. But do you remember as clearly how the note of that episode is caught up again at a distance of more than 1,800 pages—and of eighteen years. Jean Valjean is dying. Dying, and at peace. His mind travels back over turbulent years; it travels among lives touched by the beneficence of his redeemed soul, shaped to salvation by his ministering hands. He looks from the bed toward the mantelpiece whereon stand two candlesticks. His voice is faint. He is bequeathing the candlesticks to Cosette. "They are silver," he says.

"'. . . but to me they are made of gold, of diamonds; they transform the candles placed in them into consecrated tapers. I know not whether the man who gave them to me is satisfied with me above. I have done what I could. . . . Do not weep, my children. I am not going very far, and I shall see you from there; you will only have to look up at night and you will see me smile. . . . Thus God apportions things. . . . He sees us all, and he knows what he does amid his great stars. . . . Love each other well and always. There is no other thing in the world but that; love one another. . . . My children, I can no longer see clearly. I had other things to say to you, but no matter. Think of me sometimes. . . . I don't know what ails me! I see light. Come nearer yet. I die happy. Let me lay my hands on your beloved heads.'

"He had fallen back; the light from the two candles fell full upon him."

In the ancient days the epic dealt with wars human and wars celestial—always wars. In our time came a new kind of epic—the epic of pity. "Les Misérables" is that epic. It spoke to hoping mankind. To those who hope, and to those who, cast down, still struggle on, still hope, it said, "If you wish to understand what progress is, call it To-morrow," and so it gave them hope for the morrow. Do you who have traveled far and are aweary call it a rebel book, a book of sentiment run into mad sentimentality? So did Hugo's dear friend Lamartine—friend of forty fond years—and pronounced it "dangerous" because "it excites in the ignorant man a craving for the impossible," *i.e.*, "an aspiration for the extinction of our miseries."

Divine impossibility! But impossibilites that are divine somehow get themselves wrought into actuality, for they spring from the souls of unconquerable men.

Do you who are trustful, you who are not aweary, call this epic of pity a book of religion also? So did the Dutch pastors who, sixty-two years ago, when it was new, were reading it from the pulpits of the Netherlands to their congregations. It was, they said, "the gospel of the people."

It remains, nevertheless, a rebel book. "But," as the dying Jean Valjean whispered—a sense of humor helping him along the dark road—"but because things are unpleasant is no reason for being unjust to God."

## LVIII

## MACAULAY'S "ENGLAND"

(Volumes I and II first published in 1848; III and IV in 1855; and volume V in 1861 after Macaulay's death)

*The best-written histories will be accounted the best.*
("History of England"; preface.) LEOPOLD VON RANKE.

*I asked [James] Stephen by what mental process Macaulay had contrived to accumulate such boundless stores of information, and how it was all so sorted and arranged in his head that it was producible at will. He said that he had first of all the power of abstraction, of giving his undivided attention to the book and the subject on which he was occupied; then, as other men read by syllables or by words, he had the faculty, acquired by use, of reading by whole sentences, of swallowing, as it were, whole paragraphs at once, and thus he infinitely abbreviated the mere mechanical part of study; that as an educated man would read any number of pages much more quickly than an uneducated man, so much more quickly would Macaulay read than any ordinary man. Therefore it is first and foremost the power of abstraction, that faculty of attention and of rendering up his mind to the matter before him, which makes all his reading profitable, and leaves nothing to be wasted and frittered away.*

CHARLES C. F. GREVILLE.
("Journal of the Reign of Queen Victoria," Vol. I, p. 106.)

WE are scurrying up and down the southwestern counties of England with an informed and acute English gentleman named Thomas Babington Macaulay. He is a beetle-browed man, plain of face and unimpressive of figure, but that face is animated by a searching eye and the movements of that figure are given meaning by a consuming interest in the progress of events. His clothes fit him ill, a fact of which he appears oblivious. His vocabulary is torrential and for an hour he can hold forth with illumination on any topic under the sun. He is in his early forties and a

bachelor, but he loves children with self-sacrificing tenderness and devotion. He is a good walker and the dire roads do not much incommode him.

In politics he is a vehement Whig and thoroughly representative of the utilitarian ideals of mid-nineteenth century England.

But for the purposes of this chapter on a certain conspicuous best seller of the ages which Mr. Macaulay wrote we will ask him to step back from mid-nineteenth century England some two centuries and a half and guide us into the year 1688.

It is November of that year. There has been much rain. Our guide warns us that the roads will be in frightful condition. On every hand as we gallop southwestward from London with him we hear of defections from the Stuart cause.

In two exalted quarters—the palace of James II in London and the Prince of Orange's resting place in the deanery at Exeter—there are hurried conferences. The western counties are rising and from the north come good reports to the invader's followers. Those followers, jubilant over every accession and steadily gaining confidence, have sung a Te Deum in Exeter cathedral. The king is said to suspect Churchill's loyalty. "No man," whispers our eager guide, "no man knows whom to trust or whom to obey"—least of all the king's men, for, he adds, "the material strength of the royal army is diminishing; its moral strength is destroyed." He says this with relish, for frankly he is a partisan of the Prince of Orange—considers him in this crisis not alone the savior of England but the savior of all Europe. We ask him whether James in this hour when his throne is rocking will concede anything. Our acute friend thinks not—tells us that majesty keeps repeating that "not an atom" will he yield—"not an atom, not an atom," and declares that he will dismiss unanswered the first messenger bearing a flag of truce and hang the second.

Our guide's hands reach out feverishly for shreds of news, and his swift-moving mind weaves those shreds into something intelligible. He says that more of the gentry of the western counties, after days of untimely but understandable caution, now are hurrying to join the prince at Exeter, and that the prince, having gently chided their delay, said to them, "Therefore, gentlemen, friends,

and fellow Protestants, we bid you and all your followers most heartily welcome to our court and camp."

Our friend, who is a passionate Shakespearean, loves the Shakespearean roll—as if they came resounding out of one of the chronicle plays—of those words.

Each pregnant day is bringing a kind of pageantry of nation-building decisions. In the north the rich and powerful earls of Manchester, Rutland, Chesterfield, and Stamford have declared for the Prince of Orange. The duke of Devonshire has repaired in arms to Derby and then to Nottingham, and at Nottingham he has said, "The name of rebellion is a bugbear that frightens no reasonable man." Mr. Macaulay rubs his hands, for to his mind that homely but ducal assertion is one of the assertions that make history. The news he is giving us with the vivacity of a newspaper dispatch is occasionally supplemented with comment of a noble and stately sententiousness, as when he tells us that Churchill has in truth deserted to the prince, "leaving a letter," he adds, "written with that decorum which he never fails to preserve in the midst of guilt and dishonor."

No detail, nor its significance, escapes him, and, informing us that the king, now at Salisbury, had for three days suffered from violent nosebleed, he adds that the three days lost before the hemorrhage could be subdued have probably saved him from falling into a plot of Churchill's devising to deliver him to the Prince of Orange. He says the king credits his escape to his patron saint. He makes a wry face as he tells us that last, for through and through he is Protestant—as thoroughly so as he is Whig.

What vivid memory-catching, amusing minutiæ he weaves in with the momentous tidings of each day. What is ridiculous and what is tragic are interwoven. What is throne-shaking and what is destiny-making—what, in short, is high politics—are entwined with what is solely spectacular, or colorful, or quaint.

Do we remember that stupid, fatuous, pompous ass, Prince George of Denmark, husband of the king's daughter Anne, who, there is a possibility, will one day be queen? We do remember the Dane. Well, our friend says, every time news of fresh defections reaches the king and the group around him, George of Den-

mark says, "Est-il possible?"—that and nothing more. Is that not like him, our guide asks, and while we are laughing acquiescence he adds, "Don't you remember"—his favorite phrase when imparting information—"don't you remember what Charles II said about him? He said, 'I have tried Prince George sober and I have tried him drunk, and drunk or sober there is nothing in him.' "

In a few hours George, too, deserts his royal father-in-law. "What did the king say?" we ask Mr. Macaulay. "He said," replies our guide—and begins to chuckle—"he said, 'What, is "Est-il possible" gone, too? After all, a good trooper would have been a greater loss.' "

But later, when the king and the king's family are mentioned, Mr. Macaulay does not laugh. That is when he learns from his authoritative gossips within the palace at London that the king, returning to the capital and finding that daughter Anne also has deserted the falling house, had cried out in the anguish of his soul, "God help me, my own children have forsaken me!"

Still later our guide learns that Halifax in a conference with the monarch has, though soon to be as good a revolutionist as any, spoken with respect, even with sympathetic consideration, to the fallen man. Mr. Macaulay says he can forgive, nay honor, Halifax for what to some of the king's enemies seems fawning, and thereupon he again charms our ears with one of the sententious and noble utterances that fall from his lips with the dignity and force with which they fell from the lips of the historians of antiquity. It is this:

"What would justly be called flattery when offered to the powerful is a debt of humanity to the fallen."

But not long can he linger to moralize. The march of events is too swift, the actualities of the hour too urgent, the possibilities too important. Those possibilities, those certainties, our guide firmly believes, are to produce effects upon generations yet unborn and in lands widely separated from the restless, tyrant-defying England of this rainy November of 1688. He believes that what is happening in these anxious days is to make for the happiness

of the men of a remote posterity because it is going to help men to learn the long and tedious lesson of how to govern themselves—not how to be governed, not how to govern others, but *how to govern themselves.* He believes that what is happening in the England of 1688 is the decisive shifting of public authority from the side of kings to the side of parliaments. His hero in this movement of power to new bases is an austere, asthmatic man whom certain English nobles—risking their heads in doing it—have invited into England to rescue England from the plague of the Stuarts as personified by James II. That man, William, Prince of Orange, half Dutchman, half Englishman, son of Charles I's daughter Mary and married to his Uncle James' daughter Mary, our guide was later to epitomize in one of his characteristic architectural massings of phrases as "the soul of two great coalitions, the dread of France, the hope of all oppressed nations."

Amid the excitement of our Devonshire and Wiltshire days, we hurry from camp to court, from Exeter to Salisbury and from Salisbury and Andover to London. We stand by the roadside with peasants, and we see with their ingenuous and wondering eyes the army of the invader marching toward London. We listen to secret conferences in the royal closet at Whitehall with the practiced judgment which discerns motives and detects treachery.

Under Macaulay's guidance, we are everybody and we are everywhere.

With a commanding gesture he now summons us to a close view of his hero as, attended by a great train of nobles and soldiers, the Prince of Orange rides through the West Gate of Exeter. It is our guide's passion for the picturesque, his delight both in what irradiates and what humanizes history, his joy in the wonderment of the peasant and the acclamations of multitudes stirred by a great cause which make him thus solicitous that we view not only the intimacies but also the far-flung splendors of epochal days.

But now we must dismiss our fancy that we of 1927 have been traversing the southern and southwestern shires or standing at the West Gate of Exeter 239 years ago with Thomas Babington Macaulay. What we have seemed actually to see with his eyes and hear from his lips we read—every detail of it—in fewer than

two score pages of the moving Chapter IX of the "History of England" by Thomas Babington Macaulay, poet, orator, essayist, historian, parliamentarian, who was born in the same year [1800] that our own essayist, historian, diplomat, and cabinet minister, George Bancroft, was born.

Take your stand again with him then, through the medium of his book, to see the hope of Europe and of representative government ride by:

" . . . the Dutch army, composed of men who had been born in various climates, and had served under various standards, presented an aspect at once grotesque, gorgeous, and terrible to islanders who had, in general, a very indistinct notion of foreign countries. First rode Macclesfield at the head of two hundred gentlemen, mostly of English blood, glittering in helmets and cuirasses, and mounted on Flemish war horses. Each was attended by a negro, brought from the sugar plantations on the coast of Guiana. The citizens of Exeter, who had never seen so many specimens of the African race, gazed with wonder on those black faces set off by embroidered turbans and white feathers. Then, with drawn broadswords, came a squadron of Swedish horsemen in black armor and fur cloaks. They were regarded with a strange interest; for it was rumored that they were natives of a land where the ocean was frozen and where the night lasted through half the year, and that they had themselves slain the huge bears whose skins they wore. . . . The acclamations redoubled when, attended by forty running footmen, the Prince himself appeared, armed on back and breast, wearing a white plume and mounted on a white charger. With how martial an air he curbed his horse, how thoughtful and commanding was the expression of his ample forehead and falcon eye, may still be seen on the canvas of Kneller. Once those grave features relaxed into a smile. It was when an ancient woman, . . . broke from the crowd, rushed through the drawn swords and curvetting horses, touched the hand of the deliverer, and cried out that now she was happy. . . . Then came a long column of the whiskered infantry of Switzerland, distinguished in all the Continental wars of two centuries by pre-eminent valor and discipline, but never till that week seen on English ground. And then marched a succession of bands designated, as was the fashion of that age, after their leaders, Bentinck, Solmes, and Ginkell, Talmash and Mackay. With peculiar pleasure Englishmen might look on one gallant regiment which still bore the name of the honored and lamented Ossory. The effect of the spectacle was heightened by the recollection of more than one renowned event in which the warriors now pouring through the West Gate had borne a

share. For they had seen service very different from that of the Devonshire militia, or of the camp at Hounslow. Some of them had repelled the fiery onset of the French on the field of Seneff; and others had crossed swords with the infidels in the cause of Christendom on that great day when the siege of Vienna was raised. . . . Nor did the wonder of the population diminish when the artillery arrived, twenty-one heavy pieces of brass cannon, which were with difficulty tugged along by sixteen cart horses to each."

And so on. Clank, rumble, huzza! And that most inspiriting sound in the world—the clatter of the hoofs of war horses!

In sentences now as short as the sentences of Tacitus and now as long as those of De Quincey, Lord Macaulay's chronicle of the four years of the reign of James II and the thirteen years of the reign of William III runs to 3,000 pages.

It is the most gorgeous book of annals in existence.

But it is far more than that.

For what did the unimpeded entry of the asthmatic prince into Exeter mean for us of to-day? It meant the national bank idea; it meant the funding of debts; it meant the cabinet system; it meant a free press; it meant genuine constitutionalism. All those beneficent meanings Macaulay brings out in a book which, whether it treats of wars or of economics, may truly be said to contain not one dull line. Its pictorial charm is important because it lures and stimulates; its weightier aspects deserve our further attention.

## LIX

## FURTHER ASPECTS OF MACAULAY

*The liberty of discussion is the chief safeguard of all other liberties.*

*Great wealth, suddenly acquired, is not often enjoyed with moderation, dignity and good sense.*

*It is possible to be below flattery as well as above it.*

*. . . that perfect disinterestedness and self-devotion of which man seems to be incapable, but which is sometimes found in women.*

*The habit of breaking even an unreasonable law tends to make men altogether lawless.*

*Persecution produced its natural effect on them. It found them a sect, it made them a faction.*

*The Puritan hated bear baiting, not because it gave pain to the bear, but because it gave pleasure to the spectators.*

*He [Richard Rumbold on the scaffold] would never believe that Providence had sent a few men into the world ready booted and spurred to ride, and millions ready saddled and bridled to be ridden.*

*Men who have once engaged in a wicked and perilous enterprise are no longer their own masters, and are often impelled, by a fatality which is part of their just punishment, to crimes such as they would at first have shuddered to contemplate.*

*A man whose life has been passed in attacking and domineering, whatever may be his talents and courage, generally makes a poor figure when he is vigorously assailed: for, being unaccustomed to stand on the defensive, he becomes confused; and the knowledge that all those whom he has insulted are enjoying his confusion confuses him still more.*

("History of England.") THOMAS BABINGTON MACAULAY.

No man knew better than Macaulay the value of the pictorial in fixing attention and no man since the elder Pitt had employed the pictorial with greater effect. That effect he could produce not only amid the magnificence of his history but also amid the strain

and excitement of a great night in the House of Commons. His mind leaped to the vivid. "Can we wonder," he said, in his arraignment of Peel in the speech on the Maynooth College bill of 1845—the speech that contains the withering "There you sit. . . . Stand up manfully"—"Can we wonder that from one end of the country to the other everything should be in ferment and uproar, that petitions should, *night after night, whiten all our benches like a snowstorm?*"

The italicized phrase is less arresting than John Bright's "You may almost hear the beating of his wings" (Angel of Death passage in the Crimean war speech), but it was, for the immediate purpose, almost as striking an effect.

In the history—amid the swift-moving narrative of Prince William's landing at Torbay and his progress across the southern shires, which fills a large part of Chapter IX—Macaulay is not content to tell you merely that the discipline of the deliverer's forces was rigid and that the demeanor of his soldiers was civil. He does tell you that, but he also drives it home with specific taps:

"Those who had formed their notions of an army from the conduct of Kirke and his Lambs were amazed to see soldiers who *never swore at a landlady or took an egg without paying for it.*"

Glance into the work six volumes beyond or, chronologically, ten years later. He is writing of conditions existing just before the general election of 1698. The hand has not lost its cunning:

"There was peace abroad and at home. *The sentinels had ceased to watch by the beacons of Dorsetshire and Sussex.*"

This zest for the pictorial, this artist's faith in its decorative value and its vivacity, illuminate a thousand topics and personalities in this glowing book. In his account of the riots of the night of December 11, 1688, when the Great Seal lies at the bottom of the Thames and the torch has been set to the King's printing house, he tells you that that structure was "completely gutted" and bethinks himself to add—"to use a coarse metaphor which then, for the first time, came into fashion."

This vivacity, attained by his simple expedient, is of much worth; the attraction which it gives his impartment of information is of

far more worth, and a signal example of that attraction—that memory-fixing charm—is the eight pages of Chapter XXIII describing the visit of Peter the Great to England in 1698. It is shot through and through with light on Russian polity, geography, climate, trade, ecclesiasticism, domestic habits, court etiquette, and the lofty aspirations and the barbarous ways of the imperial visitor. Twenty lines plucked from the context suffice to give the pictorial quality of the account:

"Such was the prince whom the populace of London now crowded to behold. His stately form, his intellectual forehead, his piercing black eyes, his Tartar nose and mouth, his gracious smile, his frown black with all the stormy rage and hate of a barbarian tyrant, and above all a strange nervous convulsion which sometimes transformed his countenance, during a few moments, into an object on which it was impossible to look without terror, the immense quantities of meat which he devoured, the pints of brandy which he swallowed, and which, it was said, he had carefully distilled with his own hands, the fool who jabbered at his feet, the monkey which grinned at the back of his chair, were during some weeks popular topics of conversation. He meanwhile shunned the public gaze with a haughty shyness which inflamed curiosity. He went to a play; but as soon as he perceived that pit, boxes, and gallery were staring, not at the stage, but at him, he retired to a back bench where he was screened from observation by his attendants. He was desirous to see a sitting of the House of Lords; but, as he was determined not to be seen, he was forced to climb up to the leads and to peep through a small window. He heard with great interest the royal assent given to a bill for raising fifteen hundred thousand pounds by land tax, and learned with amazement that this sum, though larger by one-half than the whole revenue which he could wring from the population of the immense empire of which he was absolute master, was but a small part of what the Commons of England voluntarily granted every year to their constitutional King."

In the first of these two chapters on Macaulay's "England" it was said that enduring benefits of the revolution which Macaulay describes were the establishment of the national bank idea, the inauguration of the system of funding debts, the cabinet system, the freedom of the press, and genuine constitutionalism. Those innovations made the Revolution of 1688 glorious and fruitful, but mention of them is hardly the way to lure average readers to the average book about them. It is not so with Macaulay's book

because his is not an average book. His story of the development of the system of funding debts (about halfway through Chapter XIX) is unfolded with the color and animation of a romance, and it closes with pungent remarks on the expediency of common honesty, which would make salutary reading for our former ardent but now somewhat calculating allies. His story of the working out by Charles Montague of William Patterson's national bank idea is graced with an epitome of the allegory by Joseph Addison on Public Credit and is carried forward with such skill that high finance becomes, in Johnson's phrase, "as entertaining as a Persian tale." It is so with his story of the foundation of the freedom of the press (midway of Chapter XXI), and it is so with his story of the development of the cabinet system.

Into consideration of the famous Chapter III, giving a survey of the material and cultural state of England at the time of the accession of James II, it is perilous for a writing man to enter, so enthusiastic does he become. It is a book in itself—has, in truth, been published as a separate book by Messrs. J. M. Dent & Sons. It is a marvel of research which many a clever man could have effected coupled with an eloquence to which only Macaulay could rise. It cannot be called incomparable, however, for Gibbon's equally celebrated Chapters I and II are more spacious and more recondite. Those chapters were, manifestly, Macaulay's model. If he did not equal the model it was perhaps only because his canvas was more limited.

Macaulay's Chapter III is based on 200 sources; the seven pages on the navy alone sent him to Pepys' diary, correspondence and official reports and seven other works, some of them recondite. He deals within the space of a few score lines with sheep and oxen, crops, mines, printing presses, turnips, salted meat and when eaten and why. On a single page I count the names of twelve wild beasts and birds common in England toward the close of the seventeenth century, but now for the most part extinct. The authorities he read for that single page number eight. But despite the abundance of fact and allusion the narrative never lags. Mr. Strachey's "Queen Victoria," perhaps the swiftest-moving

piece of historical writing of our time, does not move more swiftly. More detail was never crowded into a story than Macaulay crowds into his, but he saves his reader from tedium by his adroit selection of detail. Writing of English culture in the ninth decade of the seventeenth century, he loves a touch like this:

"An esquire passed among his neighbors for a great scholar, if 'Hudibras' and Baker's 'Chronicle,' Tarlton's 'Jests' and the 'Seven Champions of Christendom,' lay in his hall window among the fishing rods and fowling pieces."

Nor does he forget Queen Mary's spelling—"This book was given the King and I, at our crownation, Marie R.," though he buries that pathetic bit in a footnote.

Together with masses of detail his pages are laden with acute and pungent observations for the guidance of mankind. He did not think history as annals alone was worth writing, but as morals he thought it the most essential study of a free people. A double handful of his typical observations, combining stateliness with practical sense, has been placed at the head of this chapter.

Much has been written of Macaulay's errors and prejudices, and his history has been called a Whig document. His errors are now conceded to be fewer than they were asserted to be in the inevitable period of reaction which followed the early popularity of his book. Nor are they errors likely to make a man a bad citizen, a bigot, a reactionary, or an oppressor of his kind. As to his prejudices, it is certain that prejudice in the field of historical writing was not entombed when Baron Macaulay of Rothley was borne to his grave in Westminster Abbey. If he was prejudiced he was prejudiced in favor of and not against the cause of liberty, and his hero was the warrior and statesman who found England despotic and left it constitutional, who found it misgoverned by cabals and left it governed by parliament and cabinet, who found loans to the state hardly more than confiscations by the state and left them stable and copious sources of public revenue, and who expelled a dynasty of princes to whom no cause was so good that they would not betray and injure it and no cause so bad that they would not serve it with a pertinacity that was worthy

of martyrs and a gallantry that has given them a deathless fame in the annals of heroism and of romance.

Lord Macaulay's story of William III's life ended with his own. His last act was to write a letter to a poor curate and inclose a check for £25. The last lines he wrote in his history were these:

"It was now between seven and eight in the morning. He closed his eyes, and gasped for breath. The bishops knelt down and read the commendatory prayer. When it ended William was no more.

"When his remains were laid out it was found that he wore next to his skin a small piece of black silk ribbon. The lords in waiting ordered it to be taken off. It contained a gold ring and a lock of the hair of Mary."

# LX

## HORACE AND A GAME TO PLAY

(The poems of Horace were composed between the years 35 B.C. and 8 B.C.)

### *THE COMPANIONABLENESS OF HORACE*

*They [Horace's Satires and Epistles] abound in strokes which shew his great knowledge of mankind, and, in that pleasing way he had of teaching philosophy, of laughing away vice, and insinuating virtue into the minds of his readers. They may serve as much as almost any writings can to make men wiser and better: for he has the most agreeable way of preaching that ever was. He was, in general, an honest good man himself: at least he does not seem to have had any one ill-natured vice about him. Other poets we admire; but there is not any of the ancient poets that I could wish to have been acquainted with so much as Horace. One cannot be very conversant with his writings without having a friendship for the man; and longing to have just such another as he was for one's friend.*

(Professor of Poetry at Oxford, 1728-38.) JOSEPH SPENCE.

I KNOW a way to make the newcomer to Horace fall in love with the delectable man. It is simple enough and blithe as a game, but rich in the discipline that gives a man generous culture.

Assemble, then, half a dozen volumes of Horace.

One of them shall contain the Latin text with, for the sake of convenience, the literal translation in English prose on the pages opposite.

Now four or five other volumes as follows—or their equivalent as selected by you:

Eugene Field's "Echoes from the Sabine Farm," to which book Francis Wilson, comedian, played Mæcenas when it originally was published because he and Mr. Field thought there would be no general sale for it, but which found so good a market that the Scribners issued it in a moderate-priced edition.

Then the comfortable little book for the pocket, "Translations

from Horace," by Irish Sir Stephen De Vere, brother of Aubrey, which the visioned publisher, Walter Scott, issued more than thirty years ago, but which still can readily be picked up in old-book shops.

Now a copy of—or something like it—the issue of the "Satires and Epistles of Horace in Latin and English," which came out in the Unit Library twenty years ago and which has the Latin on the left hand pages and on the opposite ones the English equivalent in the translation of the Rev. Philip Francis, an eighteenth century Latinist who knew his trade. The texts in the "Loeb Classical Library" series perform the same dual service of original on one page and translation on opposite page, and perform it incomparably.

And then the complete Horace, "Odes," "Epodes," "Satires," "Epistles," "Ars Poetica," and all, which the Macmillans published in their "Globe Edition," with translations, introductions, and copious notes by James Lonsdale and Samuel Lee.

Now, best of all, a handful of typewritten sheets of the celebrated English translations and paraphrases of the best poems of Horace which were made by such illustrious lovers of Horace as Ben Jonson, Cowley, Milton, Dryden, Pope, Addison, Dean Swift, young Chatterton, Lord Byron, Lord Lytton, Sir Theodore Martin, Cardinal Newman and Lord Ravensworth. That collection of sheets you may easily make at any considerable public library. When you have made it you will have a treasure.

Supplement your little shelf of Horatian translations with a life of Horace so sympathetic and loving as Grant Showerman's "Horace and His Influence" that came out in 1922 in the valuable "Our Debt to Greece and Rome" series which the Marshall Jones Company of Boston is publishing and which is financed by some of the most devoted classicists in America. Dr. Showerman's contribution to the series—his Horace volume—costs $1.50. If another copy were difficult to obtain I would not take large money for mine, so stimulating, vivid and charming is this University of Wisconsin professor's survey of the poet.

Now you are equipped for your Horatian adventures and in fair course to make a friend that will wear a lifetime.

Begin the game. Its fascination lies in the fact that, of all the Roman master-singers, Horace is perhaps the most difficult gracefully to translate into our room-needing English language. He is marvelously compact. It is a resplendent proof of any man's powers of interpretation when his version of anything of Horace succeeds in retaining the sing and swing and ripple of Horace, and his terseness with his beauty. To me the most beautiful thing Horace ever wrote—nay, *one* of the most beautiful things, for he hath a hundred "most beautiful"—is Ode 30, "To Melpomene"—which comes as the epilogue of Book III and which Dr. Tuckwell in his gay little life of Horace (1905) described as "composed in the serenity of gained renown."

In this ode Horace builds his monument. It contains a line which has been traveling from lip to lip for nearly two thousand years but which not all who quote it could credit to its author if you caught them up with "Who said that?"—the line, "I shall not wholly die."

It is delightful, and it instructs taste, to discover how English and American masters of verse have toyed with and toiled over this ode to the end that they might waft its melody and its majesty from the ancient tongue into ours. Mr. Field ("Echoes from the Sabine Farm," page 75) tried it, and may be said to have succeeded. His translation has the merits of fidelity, dignity, and sweetness. But for those merits, plus a certain splendor, I turn with intense satisfaction to the version Professor Showerman gives in his "Horace and His Influence" (page 71). Thus it moves:

*Not lasting bronze nor pyramid upreared*
*By princes shall outlive my powerful rhyme.*
*The monument I build, to men endeared,*
*Not biting rain, nor raging wind, nor time,*
*Endlessly flowing through the countless years,*
*Shall e'er destroy. I shall not wholly die;*
*The grave shall have of me but what appears;*
*For me fresh praise shall ever multiply.*
*As long as priest and silent Vestal wind*
*The Capitolian steep, tongues shall tell o'er*
*How humble Horace rose above his kind*
*Where Aufidus' rushing waters roar*

*In the parched land where rustic Daunus reigned,*
*And first taught Grecian numbers how to run*
*In Latin measure. Muse! the honor gained*
*Is thine, for I am thine till time is done.*
*Gracious Melpomene, O hear me now,*
*And with the Delphic bay gird round my brow.*

Part of our game is now to turn to our volume of Horace that has the Latin original and the English literal on opposite pages and to admire how faithful and musical Mr. Field was and how spacious and exultant Dr. Showerman is, and it will be with an interest all alive and eager that we shall come upon another version that suits so good a Horatian as Dr. Tuckwell. And so on—a dozen versions of that hymn-prayer to Melpomene we shall find. The prize of our game is that forever the glorious thing will be a special possession, for we shall know it in all its shadings, in all its potentialities to inspire heart and pen, and in many of the loving variants good Horatians have given it.

It is almost certain that the player of the game will undertake to make a variant of his own. There is no better cultural discipline.

Mr. Field loved to frolic with Horace; Sir Stephen De Vere, although Irishman, loved to be reverent and tender with the short, fat, dark-eyed little Sabine farmer whose dark hair early turned gray and who was always celebrating good wine, although by all the accounts we have of him he partook of it like a gentleman and a connoisseur.

Among the most famous of his short pieces is the "Persicos Odi" (Ode I, 38), in which the poet addresses his cupbearer or page. Take it, as part of the game, in all the bald, desolating literalness of the English prose of Lonsdale and Lee—all the Horatian ripple gone out of it:

"Boy, I detest the Persian sumptuousness; wreathes twined with bark of linden are distasteful; care not to search in what spot perchance may linger the late-blowing rose, I ask you not with busy toilsomeness to add aught to simple myrtle; myrtle misbeseems not you my cupbearer, nor myself as I drink beneath the plaited vine."

See now how Eugene Field had fun with "Persicos Odi," which in the "Echoes" he calls "The Preference Declared":

*Boy, I detest the Persian pomp;*
*I hate those linden-bark devices;*
*And as for roses, holy Moses!*
*They can't be got at living prices!*
*Myrtle is good enough for us,—*
*For* you, *as bearer of my flagon;*
*For* me *supine beneath this vine,*
*Doing my best to get a jag on!*

And here is the fond, delicate way of Sir Stephen with "Persicos Odi":

*I hate, my boy, that Persian state—*
*Those gorgeous crowns with linden bound;*
*Search not the haunts where lingering late*
*The hidden rose may yet be found.*
*A simple myrtle-fillet twine*
*For me, for both; it suits us best,*
*As, shadowed by the matted vine*
*I quaff the ruby wine, and rest.*

Sometimes I almost dare to think that Sir Stephen even betters Horace.

The severest test of a Horatian translator's powers is presented by the wonderful "Ne Forte Credas" (Book IV, Ode 9), in which Horace brilliantly and effectively—brilliant and effective it was in actual fact, as history tells us—defends his friend, the scholar Lollius, who had been unsuccessful in war and was, as a consequence, in a bad plight with the Roman authorities. I give you the second of the seven stanzas into which Sir Stephen De Vere casts the poem—a stanza so beautiful that, as we close our musing, sotto-voce reading of it, our eyes are dim with the happy tears that lovely poetry commands from lovers:

*The poet dies not. Homer reigns alone;*
*Divine Alcaeus clangs his vengeful lyre;*
*Stesichorus still chaunts in graver tone;*
*And Pindar's glowing hymns the soul inspire.*
*The generations pass away,*
*But spare Anacreon's sportive lay;*
*And love still breathes where Sappho sings,*
*And still the soul of rapture clings*
*To the wild throbbings of th' Aeolian strings.*

Joseph Spence—good Spence of the "Anecdotes"—longed to have "just such another" as Horace for his friend. But, Joseph,

he *is* our friend. He hath these twenty gray centuries been our unaging friend.

It is the happiness of certain men of letters to have left in the keeping of the ages a singularly endearing fame. Mention of their names brings a relishing smile, and a fond light is in our eyes when we take their books from the shelf. Their names come marching blithely like strains of pleasant music—Horace, Chaucer, Cervantes, Montaigne, Izaak Walton, Oliver Goldsmith, Charles Lamb, Leigh Hunt, Washington Irving, Henry David Thoreau.

Their fame is peculiar and precious. Its sources are renewed from age unto age by the deep yearning of the human heart to get itself uttered by friendly pens. The satisfaction of that yearning men call consolation. And these utterers are the consolers, the hearteners of tired hearts, the refreshers of parched minds. No night enshrouds them. They are the sunshine of literature; they are its quiet voices, and healing is in them. Their books have the fragrance of garlands woven by the ever-renewing fingers of time. That fragrance we call charm.

The special quality of this choice company is lovableness. Loving virtue, they still have pitying eyes for the frailties of their fellow men. Having studied much in books and in life, they forgive us much, for they know that we suffer much. At once spontaneous and meditative, they both delight and instruct. They speak to us as men to men, yet not as we speak to one another, for their speaking is vibrant with distinction and graced by beauty. They speak as we would like to speak, and it is this touch of mastership that makes their voices eloquent to all the pacing centuries. They have sweetness, but they are not fatuous, for wisdom informs their views of life. But their wisdom would be naught in our hearts without their tenderness. Their books are the biographies of their hearts and so we take them into our hearts.

With them each new-coming generation walks and muses in the green alleys of recollection, dappled with sunlight and with shadow. Horace and his Sabine farm, Chaucer and the Tabard inn, Montaigne and his third-floor tower room, Walton and the tavern by the River Lea at Ware, Goldsmith and his chamber overlooking the Temple Gardens, "Elia" with Mary in Colebrooke

cottage at Islington, Irving and his ivy-mantled Sunnyside, Thoreau and his hut by Walden pond—these are the hosts and the homesteads of literature, where the latchstring is always out and the hearth is always bright and the voices of cheerfulness and tolerance are saying, "Welcome, my brother!"

O happy, thrice happy few, that have made happy a world!

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

THIS list is mainly concerned not with books which we *ought* to read but with books which we shall love to read. It was compiled neither from A. L. A. catalogues, valuable though those documents always are, nor from publishers' announcements, enticing though they often are. Its source was the modest and far from systematic collection of a reader who has been browsing among books for half a century, and it is based more upon affectionate familiarity with a few books than upon expert and comprehensive knowledge of many books. Thus to work from one's own shelves is not a momentous service but only a sincere passing on of enjoyments. In short, this is not a formal bibliography but a lure list.

In giving the dates of editions it seemed more useful to mention the later editions rather than the earlier, because the later are more accessible.

The initials E. M. L. stand for the Macmillan and the Harper issues in the invaluable English Men of Letters series, and G. A. for the Scott and the Scribner issues in the Great Authors series which is almost indispensable for bibliographical matter.

## ADDISON AND STEELE AND THEIR "SPECTATOR"

W. J. Courthope's "Addison" (Macmillan, 1894, E. M. L. series) is loving in spirit and skillful in treatment.—The classic essays on Addison are Dr. Johnson's in his "Lives of the English Poets" (many editions, cheap and dear); Lord Macaulay's, which was prompted by the appearance in 1843 of Lucy Aiken's extensive but unsatisfactory biography of Addison, and Thackeray's in his "English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century." Each is from a different point of view and all three reward reading and re-reading.

The extensive essay on Sir Richard Steele in John Forster's "Biographical Essays" (Murray, 1860) is very valuable.—Thackeray on

Steele in "English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century" is charming.—"The Story of 'The Spectator'" in Austin Dobson's "Side-Walk Studies" (Oxford University Press, 1924, World's Classics Series) imparts much interesting fact and comment.

## ÆSCHYLUS AND THE "AGAMEMNON"

The best lure book to the "Agamemnon" is Gilbert Murray's translation of the play into English rhyming verse (Oxford University Press, 1920). There are adequate notes.—The edition of "Lyrical Dramas of Æschylus Translated into English Verse by John Stuart Blackie" (Dent-Dutton, 1906, Everyman's Library) contains a most helpful machinery of critical and biographical introductions and illuminating notes. The volume is worth many times its cost, which is 80 cents.—J. T. Sheppard and F. L. Lucas' "The Greek Dramatists" (Marshall Jones, "Our Debt to Greece and Rome" series) is like everything else in this great series compact, authoritative and easy to read.—The chapter on Æschylus, Sophocles and Euripides, pp. 96-128, in "The Pageant of Greece" (Clarendon Press, 1923), is compact and valuable.—For solidity, sense and deep sympathy, August Wilhelm Schlegel's "Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature" (Bell, 1902) is notable despite the fact that during the one hundred and eighteen years since the lectures were first delivered far more extensive and searching studies have appeared. Twelve of Schlegel's thirty lectures are devoted to the Greeks.—Laughlan Maclean Watt's "Attic and Elizabethan Tragedy" (Dent-Dutton, 1908) is among the comparative studies in literature that are almost the best stimulation which the young student can obtain.—C. E. Vaughan's "Types of Tragic Drama" (Macmillan, 1908) is another valuable help. It is luminous on the greatest works of the greatest dramatists from Æschylus to Ibsen, but is in no sense a routine summary book.—Another significant achievement in comparative study of literatures is the two essays entitled "Mr. Thomas Hardy and Æschylus" in W. L. Courtney's "Old Saws and Modern Instances" (Dutton, 1918).

## ANDERSEN AND HIS FAIRY TALES

The best life of Hans Andersen in his own "Story of My Life" (Houghton Mifflin, 1871, and later issues). It is diffuse but pleasing.—The chapter entitled "Four Danish Poets" in Edmund Gosse's "Northern Studies" (Scott, Camelot series) is brief but a good characterization.—Georg Brandes in his "Eminent Authors of the Nineteenth Century" (Crowell, 1886) is extensive, sweet in spirit, but disappointing.—In the essay entitled "A Grumble About Christmas

Books" in Lewis Melville's collection, "Stray Papers by William Makepeace Thackeray" (Hutchinson, 1901), comes Thackeray's celebrated apostrophe to Andersen. It will be found on page 420.—Robert Lynd's essay on Andersen in his "Books and Authors" (Putnam, 1923) is valuable.—Francis Hackett contributes a happy preface to Signe Toksvig's little edition of "Fairy Tales and Stories by Hans Christian Andersen" (Macmillan, 1923). This edition contains exquisite illustrations by Eric Pape.—Seventy-five of the Tales are given in Dr. Dulcken's translation in an inexpensive edition issued by the A. L. Burt Company.

## "ARABIAN NIGHTS' ENTERTAINMENTS"

### (Also known as "The Thousand and One Nights")

The most poetic of the authentic translations into English of "The Arabian Nights' Entertainments" is John Payne's (Villon Society, 1882-84; in thirteen volumes; another edition—called the Bassorah Edition—"published for Subscribers," 1901, in fifteen volumes).—Many, however, prefer the translation by Sir Richard Burton, in sixteen volumes, 1885-88.—There is an edition of the tales selected and edited by Andrew Lang (Longmans, 1902).—An agreeable edition for children is one containing the choicest of the tales (Harper's, 1916); vivid illustrations by Louis Rhead.—William Ernest Henley's little essay on the "Arabian Nights" in his "Views and Reviews" (Scribner, 1890) is most alluring.—Both Payne's and Burton's translations contain elaborate introductions and notes, and are in that respect indispensable.—A helpful, colorful volume to be read in connection with the reading of the tales is "Arabian Society in the Middle Ages: Studies from The Thousand and One Nights," by Edward William Lane and edited by his grandnephew, Stanley Lane-Poole (Chatto, Windus, 1883). Lane was one of the great translators of "The Thousand and One Nights" and this volume is largely made up of his notes to his translation, but the notes are drawn together so as to make a flowing narrative. There is an admirable index.

## AUSTEN AND "PRIDE AND PREJUDICE"

A biographical source book on Jane Austen is "Jane Austen, Her Life and Letters; A Family Record," by her grandnephew, William Austen-Leigh, and her great-grandnephew, R. A. Austen-Leigh (Dutton, 1913). Its chronology and other biographical machinery is excellent.—F. W. Cornish's "Jane Austen" (Macmillan, 1913, E. M. L. series) is compact and vivid.—Goldwin Smith's "Life of Jane Austen"

(Scribner, 1890, G. W. series) is intensely readable.—Other valuable studies are W. H. Pollock's "Jane Austen: Her Contemporaries and Herself" and G. E. Mitton's "Jane Austen and Her Times."—The celebrated estimate of Miss Austen by Archbishop Whately, who has been called "the discoverer of Jane Austen," may be consulted in public libraries possessing a file of the *Quarterly Review,* in which it appeared under the title "Modern Novels," January, 1821.—Another lovely tribute to Jane is to be found in "A Book of Sibyls," by Anne Thackeray Ritchie.—There is a forty-page survey of Miss Austen's heroines in the first volume of William Dean Howells' "Heroines of Fiction" (Harper, 1901). It is fond and revealing.—The newest survey of Miss Austen is R. Brimley Johnson's "Jane Austen" (Sheed, Ward, 1927). Mr. Johnson has written with authority on other eighteenth-century figures, including Sterne.—I do the reader true service in pointing him to the essay entitled "The Home-Land of Jane Austen" in Augustus Ralli's just published volume, "Critiques" (Longmans, Green, 1927), which also contains essays on our friends in "Much Loved Books," Charlotte Brontë, James Boswell, Edward Fitz-Gerald and Plutarch. Mr. Ralli's essays are solid, instructive, delicately shaded and thoroughly readable. Not all thorough books are thoroughly readable. This one is. In English criticism there is no estimate of Boswell more sympathetic and judicious than Mr. Ralli's twenty pages on the unhappy man's peculiar genius.

## BACON AND HIS ESSAYS

The most manageable life of Bacon that still is adequate is Dean Church's "Bacon" (Macmillan, E. M. L. series, and cheaper edition, Harper).—Bearing upon the more scientific side of Bacon's service to the world is Thomas Fowler's "Bacon" (Putnam, 1881, English Philosophers series). Neither Dean Church nor Professor Fowler shuts his eyes to the mournful aspects of Bacon's character and career. Macaulay's is the classic essay on Bacon and is still the source of acrimonious controversy. For that reason as well as for its eloquence it still rewards examination.—Lecture VII, "Character of Lord Bacon's Works," in Hazlitt's "Lectures on the Age of Elizabeth," in Vol. V of Waller and Glover's edition of Hazlitt (McClure-Phillips, 1902), is valuable.—There are many inexpensive but excellent editions of the "Essays." My preference is for the edition with the copious annotations by Archbishop Whately and the supplementary notes by Franklin Fiske Heard (Lee & Shepard, 1884), but perhaps that preference is too much based on the fact that it is the edition I have used since boyhood.

## BIBLE

Good starters are Professor William Lyon Phelps' "Reading the Bible" (Macmillan, 1919) and his "Human Nature in the Bible" (Scribner, 1922).—Chapters XIX and XXIX in H. G. Wells' "Outline of History" (Macmillan, revised edition, 1921) are great for background.—George Foot Moore's "Literature of the Old Testament" (Holt, 1913, Home University Library of Modern Knowledge) is convenient and very readable.—Max L. Margolis' "Hebrew Scriptures in the Making" (Jewish Publication Society of America, 1922) is valuable both for scholarship and as a point of view.—Frank Knight Sanders' "Old Testament Prophecy" (Scribner, 1921, Life and Religion series) is packed with information and is stimulating.—The Rev. Dr. John A. Rice's "Old Testament in the Life of To-day" (Macmillan, 1921) is valuable for beginners because of its simplicity and vivacity.—James S. Stevens' "The English Bible" (Abingdon Press, 1921) is arranged along unique lines and presents in convenient form masses of information, especially as to the uses which poets, orators, novelists and essayists have made of the Bible. There are other valuable special features. Well worth owning.—Doctor John S. Flory's "Dramas of the Bible: A Literary Interpretation of the Book of Job and the Song of Solomon" (Stratford Company, 1923) is stimulating.—John W. Cunliffe and Henry M. Battenhouse's "Century Readings in the Old Testament" (Century Company, 1923) is extraordinarily useful as a guide to treasures. The chronology on pages eight and nine is just what you are always looking for and seldom coming upon in such convenient form. The brief notes are helpful.—Colin Sherman Buell and John Edwin Wells' "Bible Selections Arranged for Many Uses" (Sanborn, 1923) is a skillful arrangement of notable Bible passages under the headings: Stories, Patriotic Verse and Prose, Orations and Addresses, Great Prayers, Songs and Lyrics, and so on. There is a capital index.—The Rev. Dr. John P. Peters' "Bible and Spade" (Scribner, 1922) is invaluable. Dr. Peters' lectures, now accessible in dignified book form, were originally delivered in 1921 at Lake Forest University, near Chicago, as part of the celebrated series of Bross lectures founded by William Bross.—Along similar lines, but far more extensive in scope, is the just published "Bible Lands To-day" (Appleton, 1927) by Dr. William T. Ellis who says, "The nearest to a short-cut to a classical education known to me is a journey over the route of the Bible story from Rome to Persepolis, in eastern Persia." Such a journey Dr. Ellis made, and he now vividly imparts a vast number of strange and stimulating facts.—The Reverend J. R. Cohu's "The Bible and Modern Thought" (Dutton, 1920) is consistently but not irritatingly orthodox

and is so packed with information as to be of large service in detached study of the Bible.

An invaluable aid to uncontentious and humane study of the New Testament is the so-called Jefferson Bible. A good edition of this curious and important work, with an extensive machinery of introductions and variant texts, was published in 1923 by Boni & Liveright, under the editorship of Henry E. Jackson.—Another edition entitled "The Life and Morals of Jesus of Nazareth Extracted Textually from the Gospels, together with a comparison of his doctrines with those of others, by Thomas Jefferson" was published by H. D. Thompson in 1902 but is now difficult to obtain. This edition is especially valuable as containing Mr. Jefferson's statement of his reasons for making the arrangement of the New Testament which he called "The Morals of Jesus." Mr. Jackson, unfortunately and inexplicably, omits those reasons in part, and Jefferson's syllabus, from his edition.—Haven McClure's "The Contents of the New Testament" (Macmillan, 1921) is of extraordinary value to beginners as a clarifying book.—A. H. McNeile's "Introduction to the Study of the New Testament" (Oxford University Press, 1927) is historically and critically important.—Dr. Ernest Findlay Scott's "The New Testament To-day" (Macmillan, 1921) is an ethical study of the New Testament at once sober in tone and stimulating in effect.—Edgar J. Goodspeed's "The Story of the New Testament" and "The Formation of the New Testament" (University of Chicago Press, 1916 and 1926) are useful and entertaining. Dr. Goodspeed's "The Story of the New Testament" has been reprinted fifteen times since 1916.—Ernest Renan's "Life of Jesus" (Scott, Camelot series, and many other editions), is of course indispensable in New Testament study.—The Bible references in Albert Mordell's curious book, "The Literature of Ecstasy" (Boni & Liveright, 1921), are valuable.—Algernon Sidney Crapsey's "The Ways of the Gods" (International Press, 1920) is exciting whether you believe it or not and contains a mass of curious information and bold comment.—A most humanizing and steadying book to read in connection with the study of the Hebrew Scriptures is the Rev. Dr. Gilbert Reid's "A Christian's Appreciation of Other Faiths: A study of the Best in the World's Greatest Religions" (Open Court, 1921); a beautiful book.—In connection with the reference to the late Rabbi Hirsch in the paper on The Bible in "Much Loved Books" (Boni & Liveright, 1927) the reader will find stimulating and ennobling that great scholar's "My Religion" (Macmillan, 1925).—Young people, and old, will thoroughly enjoy the spirited Hendrik van Loon's "The Story of the Bible" (Boni & Liveright, 1923).—One of the very best and most useful Bible aids has been saved for the last. It is Richard G. Moulton's "The Literary Study of the Bible:

An Account of the Leading Forms of Literature represented in the Sacred Writings" (Heath, 1899, and other editions). This volume leads the brief Bible bibliography in John Drinkwater's "The Outline of Literature" (Putnam, 1923) in which the "Story of the Bible" fills nearly seventy pages.

## BOSWELL AND HIS "JOHNSON"

The most readable biography of Boswell is the "Life of James Boswell (of Auchinleck) With an Account of His Sayings, Doings, and Writings," by Percy Fitzgerald (Appleton, 1891). It is also peppery, its assault on Hill's diffuseness being almost in the old classic manner of vituperation.—Chauncey Brewster Tinker's "Young Boswell" (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922) assembles in pleasing form a large amount of information on Boswell, much of it new. Illustrations and facsimiles abundant; an indispensable book.—The same authority's edition of "Letters of James Boswell" (Clarendon Press, 1924) probably is definitive.—Professor Tinker's "The Salon and English Letters: Chapters on the Interrelations of Literature and Society in the Age of Johnson" (Macmillan, 1915) is invaluable for sidelights; the plates most interesting.—The most convenient edition for travelers of Boswell's "Johnson" is the two-volume limp leather edition (Frowde, 1904) called the Oxford Edition.—By far the best pictorial edition is Roger Ingpen's (Sturgis-Walton, 1909). The plates are choicely selected and beautifully executed and the notes judicious. The edition is a treasure.—The monumental edition as to notes and general machinery is George Birkbeck Hill's (Harper, 1891, and revised edition soon to come forth) but it is so monumental that Boswell's text frequently is blurred and buried in Dr. Hill's notes.

The standard short life of Johnson is Sir Leslie Stephen's "Samuel Johnson" (Macmillan, 1878, E. M. L. series) and reissued a dozen times since then.—Another excellent short life is Colonel Grant's (Scott, 1887, G. W. series); bibliography very fine.—John Dennis' eighty-five page life, "Dr. Johnson" (Bell, 1905, Miniature Series of Great Writers) is admirable; the pictures pleasing.—A charming edition of Mrs. Piozzi's "Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson" is lately available (Cambridge University Press, 1925). Valuable introduction by S. C. Roberts, and good bibliography. Frontispiece is Stanfield's exquisite "Summer House at Streatham."—Thomas Seccombe's "The Age of Johnson" (Bell, 1900) is a really great survey book.—W. H. Craig's "Doctor Johnson and the Fair Sex: A Study of Contrasts" (Sampson Low, 1895) is one of the most beautiful books there is about Samuel Johnson. Portraits valuable.—"Johnson Club Papers: by Various Hands" (Scribner, 1899) is a book of little

papers by great men, among them Birrell, Massingham, Hill and Lionel Johnson, on special aspects of a great man.—The classic essays on Johnson are Macaulay's two, to be read with discretion; Carlyle's in Vol. III of his "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays," and Carlyle's "The Hero as Man of Letters" in his "Heroes, Hero-Worship and the Heroic in History."—"Dr. Johnson's Writings," an essay in Sir Leslie Stephen's "Hours in a Library" (Putnam, 1904, and other editions), is valuable.—"Dr. Johnson's Haunts and Habitations" in Austin Dobson's "Side-Walk Studies" (Oxford University Press, 1924, World's Classics series) is, like everything by Dobson on eighteenth century figures, authoritative and charming.—A recent lure book is "Samuel Johnson: Writer" (Jenkins, 1927, in the Fireside Library) a selection edited, with an introduction, by S. C. Roberts.—See also the reference to Augustus Ralli's "Critiques" in the note on Jane Austen in this reading list (page 428).

## BRONTË AND "JANE EYRE"

The incomparably vivacious study of Charlotte Brontë is Augustine Birrell s "Life of Charlotte Brontë" (Scott, G. W. series).—The monumental life is Clement Shorter's "The Brontës: Life and Letters: Being an Attempt to Present a Full and Final Record of the Lives of the Three Sisters, Charlotte, Emily and Anne Brontë from the Biographies of Mrs. Gaskell and Others, and from Numerous hitherto Unpublished Manuscripts and Letters" (Scribner, 1908). The two stately volumes running to nearly a thousand pages amply fulfill the promise of the sub-title.—The same author's "Charlotte Brontë and Her Circle" (Dodd, Mead, 1896), is less overwhelming for the beginner.—May Sinclair's "The Three Brontës" (Houghton Mifflin, 1912) is a beautiful piece of book-making and represents independent thought and original treatment of material.—The source book from which sprang much of the Brontë contention among later biographers is Mrs. Elizabeth C. Gaskell's "Life of Charlotte Brontë," of which there are many editions; one of the best is that with introduction and notes by Mr. Shorter (Harper, 1900); another satisfactory one, with pleasing illustrations, makes a volume in the twelve-volume edition of "Novels of the Sisters Brontë (Grant, 1907); the type is beautiful.—The poignancy of the obituary notice of Charlotte Brontë appearing in Harriet Martineau's "Biographical Sketches" (Macmillan, 1885) makes reference to that volume well worth while. It is out of print, and richly deserves reissue.—The text of Lady Eastlake's celebrated criticism of "Jane Eyre" in the *Quarterly Review* in 1848 will be found in Albert Mordell's fascinating compilation, "Notorious Literary Attacks" (Boni & Liveright, 1926).—An important French point of

view on the Brontës is provided by Ernest Dimnet's "The Brontë Sisters" (Cape, 1927), translated by Louise Morgan Sill.—The two essays on the Brontës in Augustus Ralli's "Critiques" (see reference in Jane Austen note, page 428) are valuable.

## BUNYAN AND "THE PILGRIM'S PROGRESS"

James Anthony Froude's "John Bunyan" (Macmillan, E. M. L. series; cheaper edition, Harper) is the model brief biography in the English language; a beautiful book in itself and a sympathetic presentation of Bunyan.—Macaulay's two essays on Bunyan, 1831 and 1854, are the classic monographs on the inspired tinker.—Canon Venables' "Life of John Bunyan" (Scott, 1888, G. W. series) is a valuable companion to Froude's. Like all the lives in the admirable Great Writers series Canon Venables' book has a really great bibliography.—Vol. VI in Paul Elmer More's "Shelburne Essays" contains an essential essay on Bunyan. The eleventh volume of this series, entitled "A New England Group and Others" has an index of the complete series. These books are eminently worth owning. They are published by Houghton Mifflin.—In buying a "Pilgrim's Progress" the reader will do well to look for an edition prefaced by the brief, poignant life of Bunyan by himself. It is the best possible gloss on the life and character of the man.

## BURNS AND "HIGHLAND MARY"

The standard biography of Burns is John Gibson Lockhart's "Life of Robert Burns" (there are many editions among which convenient ones are, Dent-Dutton's, 1907, in Everyman's Library, and McClurg's, 1905, the latter supplemented by Carlyle's essay on Burns, a short sketch of Lockhart, and a well arranged chronology of Burns' life).—Carlyle's is the classic essay on Burns and will be found in Vol. I of his "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays."—Principal John Campbell Shairp's "Burns" (Macmillan, E. M. L. series) is careful because it is by a scholar and sympathetic because it is by a poet and a Scotchman.—Professor John Stuart Blackie's "Life of Robert Burns" (Scott, G. W. series, and issued by Scribner in this country in 1888) is in the happiest vein of the great Greekist and author of the precious vade mecum for young people, "On Self-Culture."—Robert Louis Stevenson's "Some Aspects of Burns" in his Familiar Studies of Men and Books (in Vol. XIV of the Scribner Edition, 1895, of Stevenson's works) is vivid and searching, his plea being that while "Carlyle made an inimitable bust of the poet's head of gold" he would have "more to do with the feet, which were of clay."—Professor

Walter Raleigh's essay on Burns in his "Some Authors" (Clarendon Press, 1923) is lofty and sympathetic, pointedly declining to concern itself with "the feet which were of clay."

## BYRON AND "CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE"

A mine of material at once absorbing and illuminating about Lord Byron is the "Life, Letters and Journals of Lord Byron" (Murray, 1908).—An adequate biography, sympathetic and searching, was written by the Scotch poet and teacher, Professor John Nichol (Macmillan, E. M. L. series).—The so-called "Confessions of Lord Byron" (Scribner, 1905) is an arrangement by W. A. Lewis Bettany of Byron's—as the sub-title puts it—"Private Opinions of Men and of Matters Taken from the New and Enlarged Edition of His Letters and Journals." It contains an interesting introduction by Mr. Bettany on "Byron's Obligation to Johnson."—A new compilation is "Lord Byron in His Letters" (Murray, 1927) by V. H. Collins, with a brief introduction. It is a useful short-cut book.—All of William Hazlitt's estimates of Byron possess not only the value of contemporaneousness but also the value of Hazlitt's constitutional originality and independence. His brief essay on Canto IV of "Childe Harold's Pilgrimage" will be found in Vol. XI of Waller and Glover's edition of Hazlitt's Collected Works (Dent-McClure, 1904). In the same volume is the more extensive consideration of Byron entitled "Pope, Lord Byron and Mr. Bowles." In Vol. IV comes another pungent essay on Lord Byron.—Matthew Arnold's "Byron" in his "Essays in Criticism" (Macmillan, 1902, Eversley series) is notable and sympathetic. —Joseph Mazzini's "Byron and Goethe" in "Essays: Selected from the Writings, Literary, Political and Religious, of Joseph Mazzini" (Scott, Camelot series) is stimulating.—The extensive essay on the Byron revival in William P. Trent's "The Authority of Criticism and Other Essays" (Scribner, 1899) is important.—John Cowper Powys' "Byron" in his "Suspended Judgments: Essays on Books and Sensations" (American Library Service, 1923) is extraordinarily vivacious and confident.—"Byron Once More" in Robert Lynd's "Books and Authors" has the same qualities of assurance and sparkle.

## CARLYLE AND "THE FRENCH REVOLUTION"

The great source books on Carlyle are James Anthony Froude's "Thomas Carlyle: A History of the First Forty Years of His Life" (Scribner, 1882, and other editions), "Thomas Carlyle: A History of His Life in London" (Scribner, 1884), and Thomas Carlyle's "Reminiscences," edited by Froude (Scribner, 1881). The last named vol-

ume contains on pp. 408-416 especially poignant passages on the completion of "The French Revolution."—Alexander Carlyle and Sir James Crichton-Browne's "The Nemesis of Froude" (Lane, 1903) contains the other side of a strange story and is interesting.—A review of "The French Revolution," which appeared in the year of its publication, 1837, has survived as literature. It is Thackeray's brief but deeply sympathetic survey and is to be found in Vol. XIII, "Ballads and Miscellanies," of the Biographical Edition of his works.—Another significant early review by a great man is Joseph Mazzini's essay now reprinted in "Essays: Selected from the Writings, Literary, Political, and Religious, of Joseph Mazzini" (Scott, Camelot series). The same volume contains Mazzini's essay, "On the Genius and Tendency of the Writings of Thomas Carlyle."—Moncure D. Conway's "Thomas Carlyle" (Harper, 1881) gives sidelights not to be found elsewhere and it should be reprinted.—"Notorious Literary Attacks" (Boni & Liveright, 1926) contains the London Athenæum's slashing review of "The French Revolution," in 1837.—The "Guide to Carlyle" (Allen, Unwin) by Augustus Ralli, author of "Critiques," is an extensive, and expensive (42 shillings) two-volume analysis of Carlyle's works, and constitutes a critical biography of much interest.—The latest study of Carlyle is Norwood Young's "Carlyle: His Rise and Fall" (Duckworth, 1927).

## CELLINI AND HIS AUTOBIOGRAPHY

The translation of Cellini far surpassing all others is John Addington Symonds' "The Life of Benvenuto Cellini Newly Translated into English" (Scribner, 1903). Symonds' forty page introduction is invaluable. The illustrations are very helpful.—Robert H. Hobart Cust's "Benvenuto Cellini" (Methuen, 1912, Little Books on Art series) is a fine specimen of the biographical-critical monograph. Here, too, the illustrations are helpful.

## CERVANTES AND "DON QUIXOTE"

The latest extensive presentation of Cervantes is Han Ryner's "The Ingenious Hidalgo Miguel Cervantes" (Harcourt-Brace, 1927). It develops new points of view.—James Fitzmaurice-Kelley's "Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra" (Oxford Press, 1913), is a solid, vivid piece of biography and is well regarded.—Rudolph Schevill's "Cervantes" (Duffield, 1919, Master Spirits of Literature series) is biographically, critically and bibliographically valuable.—The thirty-three page chapter on Cervantes in George Woodberry's "Great Writers" (Macmillan, 1912) is a rapid, assured survey.—Section II, Chapter VII, Part III,

of Henry Hallam's "Introduction to the Literature of Europe in the Fifteenth, Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries" (many editions) contains six pages close packed with relishing common sense on "Don Quixote." Indeed almost all the references to Bacon, Chaucer, Dante, à Kempis, Luther, Milton, Molière, Montaigne, and Rabelais in Hallam's marvel of erudition are indispensable to the student as well as good reading. It is a book to own.—Lowell's address on "Don Quixote" before the Workingmen's College of London is perfection. It is to be found in Vol. VI of the Standard Library Edition of Lowell's works (Houghton Mifflin, 1890). In it comes Lowell's celebrated epigram, "If you wish to know what humor is, I should say read 'Don Quixote.' "—Prof. Walter Raleigh's essay on "Don Quixote" in his "Some Authors" (Clarendon Press, 1923) is brief and pungent—John Bailey's tercentenary lecture on "Don Quixote" in his "The Continuity of Letters" (Clarendon Press, 1923) is most stimulating.—The essay on "Don Quixote" in Giovanni Papini's "Four and Twenty Minds" (Crowell, 1922) is piquant and provocative, being criticism by disagreement with all other critics.—The late Arthur Platt's "Nine Essays" (Cambridge University Press, 1927) contains an authoritative study of Cervantes. Prof. Platt had the touch that gave his writings an appeal to laymen as well as scholars. —Heinrich Heine's exquisite little essay on "Don Quixote" is a classic and is to be found in the little volume of selections entitled "The Prose Writings of Heinrich Heine" (Scott, Camelot series).—A convenient edition of "Don Quixote" for the pocket was issued in 1913 by Bell in the Bohn's Popular Library series. It is Motteux's savory translation and is prefaced by John Gibson Lockhart's compact, unassuming life of Cervantes, and contains Lockhart's notes.—But you can do the young reader no greater favor than to place in his hands the edition of "Don Quixote" edited by William Dean Howells and prefaced by a charming introduction by his daughter, Mildred Howells (Harper, 1923). This is Jervas' translation.

## CHAUCER AND "THE CANTERBURY TALES"

Dr. A. W. Ward's "Chaucer (Macmillan, 1880, E. M. L. series, and cheapter edition, Harper) is a two-hundred page relishing life of Chaucer.—Tuckwell's "Chaucer" (Bell, 1904, Miniature Series of Great Writers) is all compact of sympathy and information. The brief chapter entitled "Guide to the Reading of Chaucer" will give heart to the beginner.—The fifth volume of Henry Morley's "An Attempt Towards a History of English Literature" (Cassell, 1890) is devoted almost wholly to Chaucer, and it is invaluable. Seekers of the book will have to look for it on library shelves under the volume-

label "English Writers."—The forty pages of "Specimens of Chaucer" in Leigh Hunt's "The Seer; or, Common-places Refreshed" (Roberts, 1878) is good lure reading for the beginner.—The extensive essay on Chaucer in the third volume of "Literary Essays" in the Standard Library Edition of the works of James Russell Lowell (Houghton Mifflin, 1899) is important.—A magnificent panorama of luminous comment and benighted comment on Chaucer's poetry is provided by the three volumes of Miss Caroline F. E. Spurgeon's scholarly collection, "Five Hundred Years of Chaucer Criticism and Allusion: 1357-1900" (Macmillan, 1926). The work is expensive ($16.50) but is indispensable to comprehensive survey of Chaucer.—The latest contribution to the rich literature of Chaucer commentary is "Some New Light on Chaucer: Lectures delivered at the Lowell Institute," by John Matthews Manly (Holt, 1927). The volume contains much fresh and illuminating material assembled by a loving authority.

## CHESTERFIELD AND THE LETTERS TO HIS SON

The most valuable of the latter day biographies of Lord Chesterfield is W. H. Craig's "Life of Lord Chesterfield" (Lane, 1907). It breaks new ground in that it emphasizes the lofty qualities of Chesterfield's career as a public servant. Detail is copious. The twenty-eight portraits are extremely interesting.—"The New Chesterfield" in Austin Dobson's "Eighteenth Century Vignettes" is a lovely tribute to the urbanity and poise of Chesterfield, and the book prompted a brief essay by Lionel Johnson—to be found in his "Reviews and Critical Papers" (Dutton, 1921)—which is in itself literature. It was in "The New Chesterfield" that Mr. Dobson uttered the phrase, "the cultus of the imperturbable," since become classic. He spoke of Chesterfield's letters to his son as "inculcating a special code or scheme of conduct, which may be described roughly as the cultus of the imperturbable."—The reader who has leisure will thoroughly enjoy turning the pages of Chesterfield's "Miscellaneous Works" as edited by Dr. Maty (Dilly, 1789). The stately old edition contains Maty's extensive memoirs of Chesterfield. It may be picked up for a few dollars in old book stores. Some of the plates are exquisite.

## CRANMER AND "THE BOOK OF COMMON PRAYER"

A valuable biography of the prelate who had the most to do with giving "The Book of Common Prayer" its original form and the spirit abiding in it, is Anthony C. Dean's "Life of Thomas Cranmer, Archbishop of Canterbury" (Macmillan, 1927).—A highly interesting edi-

tion of "The Book of Common Prayer" is "The Pictorial Edition of the Book of Common Prayer According to the Use of the United Church of England and Ireland" (Sangster, London). It contains a brief, clear introductory history of the liturgy and is especially valuable for its retention of certain prayers such as those on "The Gunpowder Treason," on "King Charles the Martyr," on "The Restoration of the Royal Family," which do not appear in editions with which Americans are familiar. The title page bears no date but the volume was probably published at least fifty years ago. It may not infrequently be come upon in old book stores and is well worth acquisition. The Reverend Von Ogden Vogt's "Art and Religion" (Yale University Press, 1921) is an extraordinarily comprehensive and vivid survey of contemporaneous ritualistic trends in non-ritualistic denominations. The references to "The Book of Common Prayer" in it are illuminating. The general treatment is masterly. The illustrations are very interesting.—A mine of fascinating information concerning "The Book of Common Prayer" is "A New History of the Book of Common Prayer with a Rationale of its Offices, on the Basis of the Former Work by Francis Procter, Revised and Rewritten by Walter Howard Frere" (Macmillan, 1902). Being in its present form, the work of a priest of the Community of the Resurrection, this book is written strictly from a churchman's point of view. It nevertheless rewards study by the nonchurchman.

## DANA AND "TWO YEARS BEFORE THE MAST"

The authoritative life of Richard Henry Dana, Jr., is by Charles Francis Adams (Houghton Mifflin, 1890); unfortunately it is out of print but an effort should be made to consult it in public collections for it is indispensable to study of a man who was a great moral and civic force.—Valuable illumination on his career is provided by "Richard Henry Dana, Jr.: Speeches in Stirring Times and Letters to a Son: Edited, With Introductory Sketch and Notes, by Richard H. Dana (3d)" (Houghton Mifflin, 1910).—The best edition of "Two Years Before the Mast" was published in 1911 by Houghton Mifflin. It contains an introduction and a supplementary chapter by the author's distinguished son, maps, ship diagrams, and E. Boyd Smith's charming pictures in color and in black and white. It is an ideal gift book for a boy.

## DEFOE AND "ROBINSON CRUSOE"

For a brief biography of Defoe there is nothing more savory than the Ballantyne-Scott sketch of Defoe in Sir Walter Scott's "Lives of

the Novelists" (Dent-Dutton, Everyman's Library).—Professor William Minto's "Defoe" (Macmillan, 1907, E. M. L. series) is authoritative.—A model brief sketch, from both the literary and pictorial points of view, is Albinia Wherry's "Daniel Defoe" (Bell, 1905, Miniature Series of Great Writers). It runs to a hundred and twenty-eight small pages and contains a condensed bibliography.—A most useful survey book is William P. Trent's "Daniel Defoe, How To Know Him" (Bobbs, 1916).—"Defoe's Novels" in Sir Leslie Stephen's "Hours in a Library" (Putnam, 1904), is masterly.—"Daniel Defoe" in John Forster's "Biographical Essays" (Murray, 1860), is the compact erudition of a man who thoroughly knew his subject.—The extensive essay on Defoe in Vol. X of Waller and Glover's edition of Hazlitt (McClure-Phillips, 1904) is important.—Very valuable and convenient are the introductions to the various writings of Defoe by Dr. G. H. Maynadier of Harvard in the sixteen volume edition of "The Works of Daniel Defoe" (Crowell, 1903). These introductions are not alone scholarly but alluring.

## DICKENS AND "DAVID COPPERFIELD"

The standard and most extensive biography of Dickens is John Forster's "The Life of Charles Dickens" (Scribner, 1904). This is a comely edition. A new edition (Palmer, 1927) contains an introduction by the Dickens authority, J. W. T. Ley, together with copious notes, additions, and illustrations.—George Gissing's "Charles Dickens: A Critical Study" (Dodd, Mead, 1898) is invaluable.—Gilbert K. Chesterton's "Charles Dickens: A Critical Study" (Dodd, Mead, 1907) is more biographical than Gissing's book of the same title. It is stimulating but has not the lovely subtlety and delicacy of Gissing's study. Both books are worth owning.—Valuable for their abundant and conveniently arranged data on the periods and circumstances in which the novels were written, are Edwin Percy Whipple's introductions to the various volumes of the Standard Library Edition of Dickens (Houghton Mifflin, 1894). The plates are excellent. This is the edition that contains Pierce and Wheeler's celebrated "Dickens Dictionary," which is indispensable as a guide.—A new study of Dickens is J. C. Squire's "Charles Dickens" (Macmillan, 1927, E. M. L., new series).

## DICTIONARIES

Dr. Johnson's "Plan of an English Dictionary" addressed to the Earl of Chesterfield, although written a hundred and eighty years ago, is still a vital document for dictionary makers and dictionary users.

His preface to "The English Dictionary," which was written eight years later, is not only valuable as a technical document but in its closing passages is a lofty piece of literature. Both the Plan and the Preface appear in Vol. II of Arthur Murphy's edition (1806) of Johnson's works and are also included in all worthy editions of later date.—Horace E. Scudder's "Noah Webster" (Houghton Mifflin, 1882, American Men of Letters series) is not only adequate as to the facts of Webster's career but is written in a strain of fond appreciation of the doctor's noble character.—The Funk and Wagnalls Company published in 1915 a valuable brochure entitled "The Development of the Dictionary of the English Language With Special Reference to the Funk and Wagnalls New Standard Dictionary." It was prepared by Frank H. Vizeteily, a fine scholar. It may be obtained by owners or prospective purchasers of the New Standard by application to the publishers.

## DUMAS PÈRE AND "THE THREE MUSKETEERS"

Harry A. Spurr's "Life and Writings of Alexandre Dumas" (Dent, 1902) is thoroughly adequate. Pictures and facsimiles good, and bibliography helpful. Worth owning.—The chapter on Dumas in Abraham Hayward's "Selected Essays" (Longmans, 1879) is useful.—George Saintsbury's interesting essay, "Scott and Dumas," is now pleasantly accessible in the third volume of the series of treasure volumes called "Modern English Essays" (Dent-Dutton, 1922).—Classic allusions to Dumas are the famous passages in "On a Lazy Idle Boy" and "On a Peal of Bells" in Thackeray's "Roundabout Papers."—"A Gossip on a Novel of Dumas's" in Robert Louis Stevenson's "Memories and Portraits" is so spirited and fond that it has become almost a classic.—Maxwell's interesting essay "The Real D'Artagnan" will be found in the number of Blackwood's Magazine for June, 1897.—By far the best of the newer editions in English of "The Three Musketeers" is published by Appleton, 1922. It contains the not always reproduced "Letter from Alexandre Dumas fils" to his father "in the world to which you have gone." It is charming. Dumas père's sometimes omitted preface is retained in this satisfying edition. The scores of pictures by Maurice Leloir are thoroughly in the spirit of the tale and of genuine historical value.

## EMERSON AND HIS "REPRESENTATIVE MEN"

The standard biography of Emerson, but free of the desolation characterizing most biographies authorized by the family of the subject, is James Elliot Cabot's "A Memoir of Ralph Waldo Emerson"

(Houghton Mifflin, 1890, sixth edition). It is rich in Emerson's own utterances.—Two biographies of Emerson by masters of analysis are Professor George Woodberry's "Emerson" (Macmillan, 1907, E. M. L. series) and Richard Garnett's "Life of Ralph Waldo Emerson" (Scott, 1888, G. W. series).—Edward Waldo Emerson's "Emerson in Concord" (Houghton Mifflin, 1889) is unassuming but invaluable. It was written for that famous organization of good men, the Social Circle of Concord.—Moncure D. Conway's "Emerson at Home and Abroad" (Houghton Mifflin, 1889) is intimate and almost indispensable.—Charles J. Woodbury's "Talks With Ralph Waldo Emerson" (Baker, Taylor, 1890) is out of print but so intimate and real that it should be reissued. It can be picked up in old book stores.—John Albee's "Remembrances of Emerson" (Cooke, 1903) is another man-to-man volume containing considerable personal reminiscence and for color worth scores of pages of a formal biography.—A recent and thoroughly delightful study of Emerson appears in Van Wyck Brooks' "Emerson and Others" (Cape, London, and E. P. Dutton, New York, 1927). The London reviews of Mr. Brooks' "Emerson" are gorgeous.—The essay on Emerson in George William Curtis' "Literary and Social Essays" (Harper, 1895) gives a vivid glimpse of Emerson's home in Concord.—Edward Everett Hale's address on Emerson in his "Addresses and Essays" (Little, Brown, 1900) is a vigorous estimate.—"Emerson" in Paul Elmer More's "A New England Group and Others"—Vol. XI, in his "Shelburne Essays"—(Houghton Mifflin, 1921) is a noble appreciation.—The essay on Emerson's "Representative Men" in Vol. I of James Anthony Froude's "Short Studies on Great Subjects" is curious and interesting and to be noted in its admonition, "Mr. Emerson would have done better if he had kept to his own side of the Atlantic."—The indispensable edition of Emerson is the Centenary Edition (Houghton Mifflin, 1903) with the valuable biographical introduction by Dr. Edward Emerson and his invaluable notes to each volume.—Also indispensable to any comprehensive study of Emerson is the edition of the Journals in ten volumes (Houghton Mifflin, 1914) with annotations by Dr. Edward Emerson and Waldo Emerson Forbes. These are ideal bedside volumes.

## FIELDING AND "TOM JONES"

A very satisfying life of Fielding for the student is G. M. Godden's "Henry Fielding: A Memoir, Including Newly Discovered Letters and Records, With Illustrations from Contemporary Prints" (Sampson Low, 1909). Illustrations are abundant and highly interesting.—Austin Dobson's "Fielding" (Macmillan, 1894, E. M. L. series) is not only authoritative biography but enchanting literature.—Sir Leslie

Stephen's essay on Fielding's novels in his "Hours in a Library" (Putnam, 1904, and other editions) is valuable.—James Russell Lowell's address at the unveiling of Fielding's bust in Taunton, 1883, is a gem. It is to be found in Vol. VI of Houghton Mifflin's Standard Library Edition of Lowell.—Andrew Lang's "Fielding" in his "Letters on Literature" (Longmans, 1892) is brief but celebrated; in fact one of the classic documents in Fielding criticism.—William Ernest Henley's "Fielding" in his "Views and Reviews" (Scribner, 1890) is another gem in a volume which contains forty gems.—The Fielding commentary in Robert Naylor Whiteford's "Motives in English Fiction" (Putnam, 1918) and in Professor Wilbur Cross' "The Development of the English Novel" (Macmillan, 1915) is of genuine value. They are books to own.—The newest study of Fielding is "Fielding the Novelist," by Frederick T. Blanchard (Yale University Press, 1927). It is fresh, discriminating and entertaining, and has the warm approval of Professor Cross of Yale, the foremost of living authorities on Fielding and Sterne.

## FRANKLIN AND HIS "AUTOBIOGRAPHY"

Good biographies and studies of Franklin are numerous. Among them are Paul Leicester Ford's "The Many Sided Franklin" (Century Co., 1899); Phillips Russell's "Benjamin Franklin, the First Civilized American" (Brentano, 1926); John Bach McMaster's "Benjamin Franklin as a Man of Letters" (Houghton Mifflin, 1887), and the same author's "Benjamin Franklin" in Houghton Mifflin's American Men of Letters series.—John T. Morse's "Benjamin Franklin" (Houghton Mifflin, 1899, in American Statesmen series) is careful and weighty.—Sydney George Fisher's "Benjamin Franklin" (Kegan Paul, London, and Lippincott, Philadelphia) is worthy of the author who has given us the most readable biography of Daniel Webster.—An especially useful edition of Franklin's Autobiography is that in Everyman's Library (Dent-Dutton, 1908) because Franklin's fragment is supplemented by W. Macdonald's "Some Account of Franklin's Later Life Principally in Relation to the History of His Time."—An edition of the Autobiography interesting by reason of the fifteen-page introduction by Woodrow Wilson was published by the Century Company in 1901 and reissued in 1920.—A brief, masterly survey of Franklin by the lamented Stuart P. Sherman appears in "A Short History of American Literature Based Upon the Cambridge History of American Literature" (Putnam, 1922). This volume is well worth owning.—The essay on Franklin in Theodore Parker's "Historic Americans" (American Unitarian Association, 1908) is a great document to put in the hands of a boy. The society known as "The

Benjamin Franklins" ought to reprint it for general circulation.—The four-page tribute to Franklin in Frederic Harrison's "Memories and Thoughts; Men—Books—Cities—Art" is superb. For information on current significant publications bearing on Franklin, the reader may well keep in touch with the society of "The Benjamin Franklins," Benjamin Franklin Affleck, President, 210 South Lasalle Street, Chicago.—The latest addition to Franklinana is "The Wisdom of Benjamin Franklin," which presents in three volumes ($2.50 each) Franklin's Autobiography; Political and Economic Essays and Moral, Social and Scientific Essays (Putnam, 1927).

## GIBBON AND "THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE"

J. Cotter Morison's "Gibbon" (Macmillan, 1878, E. M. L. series and cheaper edition, Harper) is authoritative.—The biographical treasure on Gibbon, however, is his own "Memoirs of My Life and Writings" which is usually prefixed to editions of "The Decline and Fall." It is a fragment but indispensable.—The best essay on Gibbon, and one of the best biographical essays in the English language, is to be found in the first volume of Walter Bagehot's "Literary Studies" (Longmans, 1905, the Silver Library). The three volumes are well worth owning.—"The Centenary of Gibbon" in Frederic Harrison's "Memories and Thoughts: Men—Books—Cities—Art" (Macmillan, 1906) is only a dozen pages but is a broad, stimulating treatment of a great theme. In it Mr. Harrison gave high praise to Mr. Cotter Morison's "Gibbon."—The brief essays, "Gibbon," and "Gibbon's Memoirs" in the second series of Sir James Fitzjames Stephen's "Horæ Sabbaticæ" (Macmillan, 1892) reward examination.—"The Miscellaneous Works of Edward Gibbon, Esq., With Memoirs of His Life and Writings, Composed by Himself: With Occasional Notes and Narrative, by the Right Honorable John, Lord Sheffield" (Murray, 1814) is a rich mine of erudition and an almost indispensable source book for comprehensive study of Gibbon. The five volumes are not infrequently to be obtained at a reasonable price in old book stores.—The young student may properly be reminded that Gibbon's "Decline and Fall" will perform for him one of its greatest services if it leads him into Lord Bryce's "The Holy Roman Empire," which may be roughly defined as a continuation of Gibbon.

## GOETHE AND "FAUST"

The most helpful of the briefer studies of Goethe and "Faust" is Hjalmar H. Boyesen's "Goethe and Schiller: Their Lives and Works,

Including a Commentary on Goethe's 'Faust'" (Scribner, 1879).—Perhaps the best of the brief lives of Goethe is James Sime's "Life of Johann Wolfgang Goethe" (Scott, G. W. series).—George Henry Lewes' "Life of Goethe" (Routledge-Dutton; also now in Everyman's Library, Dent-Dutton) retains after three-quarters of a century the ardor and earnestness of fine pioneer work in a great field.—Heinrich Düntzer's "Life of Goethe," translated by Thomas W. Lyster (Macmillan, 1883) is authoritative, and is enlivened by portraits. It is especially valuable for detail.—Calvin Thomas' "Goethe" (Holt, 1917) is an honor to American scholarship and represents the fruit of forty years of study and teaching of Goethe.—Joseph McCabe's "Goethe, the Man and His Character" (Lippincott, 1912) is in the more vivacious strain of the new school of biography, is corrective of certain of Lewes' unavoidable inaccuracies and, as Mr. McCabe frankly says, amends Lewes' "serious errors in appreciation of character."—Prof. J. G. Robertson's "Goethe" (Routledge, in the Republic of Letters series, 1927) is good—and inexpensive.—The classic essays on Goethe are "Goethe" in Vol. I of Carlyle's "Critical and Miscellaneous Essays"; "Goethe's Works," "Death of Goethe," and "Goethe's Portrait" in Vol. III of the same, and "Goethe; Or, the Writer," in Emerson's "Representative Men." This last should be read in the Centenary Edition of "The Complete Works of Ralph Waldo Emerson" (Houghton Mifflin, 1903) so as to obtain the benefit of Edward Waldo Emerson's twelve pages of notes on his father's lecture on Goethe.—"Goethe as an Educator" in the Rt. Rev. J. L. Spalding's "Opportunity and Other Essays and Addresses" (McClurg, 1900), is valuable.—"Goethe and His Influence" in Richard Holt Hutton's "Essays in Literary Criticism" (Coates, 1876) is in a noble strain. The book is out of print and deserves reissue.—Benedetto Croce's "Goethe" (Knopf, 1924) is stimulating.—For a preliminary survey of Goethe and "Faust" the young reader will find nothing more sympathetic and graphic than the chapters entitled "Goethe the Man," and "Goethe the Poet," in James K. Hosmer's * "Short History of German Literature" (Jones, 1879).—The latest Goethe study is the essay on Goethe in the spirited and independent Emil Ludwig's "Genius and Character" (Harcourt, Brace, 1927).

* Dr. James Kendall Hosmer, a brave soldier and pure scholar, whose name is too little honored in the records of American literature. His books and his teaching have lured thousands of young students to great literature. His "The American Civil War" is a model of lofty, vivid narrative.

## GOLDSMITH AND "THE VICAR OF WAKEFIELD"

The standard biography of Goldsmith, which, however, is more respected than read is John Forster's "The Life and Times of Oliver Goldsmith" (1854), known in an earlier and briefer version as "The Life and Adventures of Oliver Goldsmith."—Washington Irving's shorter biography, "Oliver Goldsmith" (Putnam, 1897) was, as Irving said, "a labor of love," and it is charming.—The novelist, William Black's "Goldsmith" (Macmillan, 1878, Harper, cheaper edition, in E. M. L. series) is pleasing but not remarkable.—Austin Dobson's "Life of Oliver Goldsmith" (Scott, 1888, G. W. series) is a gem. The bibliography, as in all the volumes of this series, is extraordinarily fine.—To step back for a moment, James Prior's "Life of Oliver Goldsmith, M. B., From a Variety of Original Sources" (Murray, 1837) is a noble, sterling piece of work, and when come upon in old book stores should be acquired.—The brief essay, "The 'Vicar of Wakefield' and its Illustrators" in Austin Dobson's "Miscellanies" (Dodd, Mead, 1898) is valuable to specialists.—The essay on Goldsmith in Vol. IX "Essays on the Poets and Other English Writers" in the Author's Library Edition of De Quincey's works (Osgood, 1873) is extensive and it is literature.—The visitor to New Haven should give half a day to the new Goldsmith collection in the Yale University Library. It includes sixty-six editions of "The Vicar of Wakefield."

## HAWTHORNE AND "THE SCARLET LETTER"

The standard life of Hawthorne, and well deserving its rank, is Julian Hawthorne's "Nathaniel Hawthorne and His Wife" (Houghton Mifflin, 1893), a loving and eloquent book.—George E. Woodberry's "Nathaniel Hawthorne" (Houghton Mifflin, 1902, American Men of Letters series) is a biographical and critical study of high value. Professor Woodberry's chapter on "The Scarlet Letter" is indispensable.—Another critical appreciation of importance is Henry James' "Hawthorne" (Macmillan, E. M. L. series).—An unassuming little book on Hawthorne but of genuine value because it tells a simple, intimate story in a manly way is Horatio Bridge's "Personal Recollections of Nathaniel Hawthorne" (Harper, 1893). The eminent Woodberry made grateful acknowledgment of the use the book was to him. —Vol. III of Sir Leslie Stephen's "Hours in Library" (Putnam, 1904) contains a graceful essay on Hawthorne.—George William Curtis' "Literary and Social Essays" (Harper, 1895) contains two urbane and sympathetic essays on Hawthorne.—Richard Holt Hutton's "Essays in Literary Criticism" (Coates), includes an essay on Hawthorne which is valuable as representing enthusiastic English opinion.

—A brief appreciation of Hawthorne by Henry James appears in the little volume entitled "Novelists" (Doubleday-McClure, 1899, Studies of Great Authors series). The essay is notable for rapidity of survey. —There is an extensive study of Hawthorne in W. C. Brownell's "American Prose Masters" (Scribner, 1923, Modern Students' Library). Dr. Brownell is always weighty and stimulating. The volume contains an important introduction by the late Stuart P. Sherman.—The fourth lecture, "Nathaniel Hawthorne and Puritanism," in William Lyon Phelps' "Some Makers of American Literature" (Marshall Jones, 1923) is valuable.—"Hawthorne's Hester Prynne" in Vol. I of William Dean Howells' "Heroines of Fiction" (Harper, 1901) is important as being a study of a master's masterpiece by a master.—Mr. Mordell's invaluable "Notorious Literary Attacks" (Boni & Liveright, 1926), contains Bishop Coxe's preposterous attack on "The Scarlet Letter" which appeared in the Church Review in 1851. As a document in density it is entrancing.—A new survey of Hawthorne is Herbert Gorman's "Nathaniel Hawthorne" (Doran, 1927).—Ernest Boyd's new volume "Literary Blasphemies" (Harper, 1927) includes spirited and sometimes spiteful essays on Hawthorne, Milton, Byron, Dickens, and Whitman.

## HOMER AND THE "ODYSSEY"

Those who have heard Dr. John Adams Scott, professor of Greek in Northwestern University, lecture on Homer will turn eagerly to his "Homer" in the "Our Debt to Greece and Rome" series (Marshall Jones, 1925). Dr. Scott's more extensive work on Homer, "The Unity of Homer" (University of California Press, 1921), represents thirty years of research. It is luminous, vigorous, and urbane on a subject to which the attribute of urbanity has not invariably been brought; in other words, the pundits have frequently abused each other like pickpockets. William E. Gladstone's "Homer" (Appleton, 1884, and other editions) is close-packed and eloquent.—J. A. K. Thomson's "Studies in the Odyssey" is admirable.—Samuel Butler's "The Authoress of the Odyssey" (Dutton) is piquant and whimsical, but contains a great deal of stimulating scholarship.—Matthew Arnold's essay, "On Translating Homer," is a classic authority, and a more comprehensive study of Homer than its title would imply.—"Mr. Bryant's 'Homer'" in Edmund Clarence Stedman's "Genius and Other Essays" (Moffat, 1911) contains valuable sidelights on the general theme of Homer and his translators. The same volume contains "Treasure Tombs at Mykenæ," a brilliant sidelight not only on Homer and the "Odyssey" but also on the "Agamemnon" of Æschylus. The translations which the essay contains are interesting specimens.—The essay

on Homer in James Anthony Froude's "Short Studies on Great Subjects" (Everyman's Library and other editions) is beautifully written.—A useful bibliography of outstanding translations of Homer will be found in Vol. I, pp. 65-66, of John Drinkwater's "Outline of Literature" (Putnam, 1923).—Very welcome to the lover of Homer is "Homer's Ithaca: A Vindication of Tradition" (Edward Arnold & Co., 1927) by the Rt. Hon. Sir J. Rennell Rodd. It contains maps, and is inexpensive.

## HORACE AND A GAME TO PLAY

Invaluable narrative and commentary on Horace is provided by W. Y. Sellar's "Roman Poets of the Augustan Age," the subtitle being "Horace and the Elegiac Poets" (Clarendon Press, 1892 and '99). More than half the volume is devoted to Horace and in both editions there is a sympathetic memoir of Dr. Sellar by Andrew Lang. The book richly deserves a place in any collection however stately.—Sir Theodore Martin's "Horace" (Lippincott, 1871, and other editions, Ancient Classics for General Readers series) is valuable.—W. Tuckwell's "Horace" (Bell, 1905, Miniature Series of Great Writers) is a charming brief survey to put in the hands of a newcomer to Horace.—But the almost incomparable specimen of brief biographies in recent years is Professor Grant Showerman's "Horace and His Influence" (Marshall Jones, 1922, Our Debt to Greece and Rome series). The reader of it becomes a Horatian for life.—The brief essay "On Translating Horace" in William P. Trent's "The Authority of Criticism and Other Essays" (Scribner, 1899) is alluring. The volume is out of print and ought to be reprinted.—As to translations of Horace there are more than fifty now available, among which Professor John Conington's is outstanding for completeness. References to other notable translations of Horace appear in the chapter "Horace and a Game to Play" in "Much Loved Books" (Boni & Liveright, 1927).

## HUGO AND "LES MISÉRABLES"

The newest biography of Hugo is Mme. A. M. F. Robinson Duclaux's "Victor Hugo" (Holt, 1921. Makers of the Nineteenth Century series). The author is English by birth and French by marriage. She brings deep sympathy to bear on her subject and the sense of humor essential to a rational estimate of Hugo. The chapter entitled "The Zenith" contains a good estimate of "Les Misérables."—Frank T. Marzials' "Life of Victor Hugo" (Scott, 1888, G. W. series) is rapid and ardent but not deficient in discrimination. The bibliography is great, up to a period within three years after Hugo's death.—"The

Memorial Life of Victor Hugo by Contemporary Writers" makes the twenty-fourth volume in Dana Estes' Illustrated Cabinet Edition of Hugo. This biography, edited by Emile Blémont, is a curious hodge podge but contains a great deal of interesting data. The twenty-page chapter on "Les Misérables" is packed with such data.—A new study of Hugo is "Victor Hugo: The Man and the Poet," by William F. Giese (Dial Press, 1927). Its tone is vehement to the point of violence, the contention being that Hugo was a barbarian. The book represents, however, searching study.—The twenty-page chapter on Victor Hugo in Sir Sidney Colvin's "Memories and Notes of Persons and Places" (Scribner, 1921) is invaluable, containing as it does some facts obtained at first hand from Victor Hugo.—Robert Louis Stevenson's essay, "Victor Hugo's Romances," in Vol. XIV, "Familiar Studies of Men and Books," in Scribner's 1895 edition of the works of Stevenson is vivid and judicious.—The essay on Victor Hugo in John Cowper Powys' "Suspended Judgments: Essays on Books and Sensations" (American Library Service, 1923) is diverting on Hugo's alleged charlatanism.—The brief pungent essay on Hugo in Robert Lynd's "Books and Authors" (Putnam, 1923) was occasioned by the appearance of Mme. Duclaux's biography.—But the incomparable estimate of Hugo appears in Maxim Gorky's "Reminiscences of Leo Nikolaevich Tolstoy" (Huebsch, 1920). It is the utterance of Tolstoy to Gorky and is here given in full: "Hugo? I don't like him, a noisy man."

## IRVING AND HIS "SKETCH-BOOK"

The most convenient and readable biography of Irving is Charles Dudley Warner's "Washington Irving" (Houghton Mifflin, 1881, American Men of Letters series).—Pierre Irving's biography of his uncle, "The Life and Letters of Washington Irving" (Putnam, 1862 and later) is full of interesting detail but its length—four volumes—has relegated it to the class of books consulted but not read.—William Cullen Bryant's "Washington Irving: A Discourse on His Life, Character and Genius" fills nearly forty pages in the first volume of Parke Godwin's edition of the prose writings of Mr. Bryant (Appleton, 1901). The discourse is in the stately, older manner.—Thackeray's "Nil Nisi Bonum," in his "Roundabout Papers" is a beautiful tribute to a man whom Thackeray knew and loved.

## KEATS AND "THE EVE OF ST. AGNES"

The most luminous and balanced life of Keats is Sir Sidney Colvin's "John Keats, His Life and Poetry, His Friends, Critics and After-

Fame" (Scribner, 1917).—The late Amy Lowell's "John Keats" (Houghton Mifflin, 1925) is monumental and develops new points of view but it has not superseded Colvin's.—Thomas De Quincey's essay on Keats in Vol. IX of his collected works (Osgood, 1873, and various other editions) is interesting.—Leigh Hunt's running commentary, with its occasional inspired lines, on "The Eve of St. Agnes" in the second volume of his "The Seer, or, Common-Places Refreshed" (Roberts, 1878) is exhilarating.—Matthew Arnold's "John Keats" in his "Essays in Criticism" (numerous editions) is brief but masterly.—James Russell Lowell's "Keats" in the first volume of his "Literary Essays" in Houghton Mifflin's Standard Library Edition of Lowell, is a masterpiece.—"The Poet of Immortal Youth" in Dr. Henry van Dyke's "Companionable Books" (Scribner, 1922) is pleasing.—The essay on Keats in Robert Lynd's "Books and Authors" (Putnam, 1923) is vivacious and illuminating. The whole book is a treasure.—But after all is said and read the fact to be kept in mind is the fact uttered by the scholarly editor of Keats, H. Buxton Forman, when he said, "Of John Keats whether as a man or as poet the best biography was written by himself all unconscious of what he was doing. It is preserved in his letters."—A convenient and copiously annotated edition of the complete works of John Keats, edited by Mr. Forman (Crowell), contains the letters.

## LAMB AND HIS ESSAYS

The biography of Lamb dearest to Elians is E. V. Lucas' "Life of Charles Lamb" (Putnam, 1905), Miss Bessie Graham remarking in her indispensable "Bookman's Manual" that Lucas is so kindred a spirit to Lamb that "he seems born to be Lamb's biographer." And Robert Lynd speaks of Lucas' two volumes as deserving "a permanent place on the shelves beside the works of Lamb himself."—Perhaps the best of the shorter lives of Lamb is Canon Alfred Ainger's "Lamb" (Macmillan, 1888, E. M. L. series). It is all compact of the best thought of a great authority on Charles Lamb.—Walter Jerrold's "Charles Lamb" (Bell, 1905, Miniature Series of Great Writers) is biographically, critically and pictorially a little treasure.—An endearing book on Lamb unhappily out of print, but not infrequently to be picked up in old book shops for a few dimes, is Barry Cornwall's "Charles Lamb: A Memoir" (Roberts, 1866). This edition, which I obtained for thirty-five cents in an old book shop, is a beautiful piece of printing, beautiful in spirit and most diverting.—De Quincey's "Charles Lamb," in Vol. II—"Biographical Essays"—of the Author's Library Edition of De Quincey's works (Osgood, 1873) and his "Recollections of Charles Lamb," in Vol. V—"Literary Reminiscences"

—in the same edition, are indispensable.—Walter Pater's essay on Lamb in his "Appreciations" (Macmillan, 1910) is subtle and charming.—Robert Lynd's essay on Lamb in his "Books and Authors" (Putnam, 1923) is a joyous appreciation.

## MACAULAY AND HIS "ENGLAND"

Any book that will lure the reader on to Trevelyan's life of his uncle, is a good book. Such a book is J. Cotter Morison's "Macaulay" (Macmillan, E. M. L. series). Morison also wrote the brilliant biography of Gibbon in the same series. Sir George Otto Trevelyan's "Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay" (Harper, 1909) is often described as ranking with Boswell's "Johnson" and Lockhart's "Scott" as one of three best biographies in the English language.—Perhaps the best essay on Macaulay is the opening one in the second volume of Walter Bagehot's "Literary Studies" (Longmans, 1905, the Silver Library).—The essay on Macaulay in the third volume of Sir Leslie Stephen's "Hours in a Library" (Putnam, 1904) is severe.—The long essay on Macaulay's "England" in William Ewart Gladstone's "Gleanings of Past Years" (Scribner) is interesting as being a statesman's estimate of a statesman's book. On the whole it is sympathetic. —"Macaulay and His Critics" in Herbert Paul's "Men and Letters" (Lane, 1901) is sympathetic and balanced.—Perhaps the most judicial of the latter-day estimates of Macaulay—and certainly the best tempered—is to be found in George Saintsbury's "Corrected Impressions: Essays on Victorian Writers" (Dodd, Mead, 1899).—A thin volume that brings us singularly close to the Macaulay of mid-Victorian days is "Marginal Notes by Lord Macaulay" (Longmans, 1907). It is well worth owning.

## MOLIÈRE AND "TARTUFFE"

The most comprehensive biography of Molière in English is H. C. Chatfield-Taylor's "Molière" (Duffield, 1906). It represents years of research, a loving spirit and a firm, confident grasp of the subject. The interrelation of Molière's life and his plays is vividly emphasized. There is an appreciative introduction by Professor T. F. Crane, Mr. Chatfield-Taylor's old master in the Romance languages at Cornell. An admirable chronology of Molière's life and a thorough bibliography are included. The illustrations by Comte de Bréville (JoB) are not only vivacious but are invaluable studies in costume.—Brander Matthews' "Molière, His Life and His Work" (Scribner, 1910) is more a study of Molière as an artist than a formal biography, although it is biographically satisfactory. The chapter, "Molière and Shakespeare,"

is very valuable.—Sir Frank T. Marzials' "Molière" (Bell, 1906, Miniature series of Great Writers) is a delightful little primer on Molière but far more satisfying than the word primer would imply.—"Molière and His Times," which constitutes Vol. IV in Karl Mantzius' "A History of Theatrical Art in Ancient and Modern Times" (Lippincott, 1905), is a great survey of a great period and a great man. It is so authoritative as to be indispensable and so vivid as to be irresistible. Otis Skinner first introduced me to it, and that was a service.—There is a brief, convenient survey of "Tartuffe" by James A. Harrison in "Studies in European Literature" (Chautauqua Press, 1908), a stimulating hand book on the masters.—George Meredith's lecture, "An Essay on Comedy and the Uses of the Comic Spirit" (Scribner, 1897), is invaluable in study of Molière.—Brander Matthews' tercentenary address, "The Modernity of Molière," in his "Tocsin of Revolt and Other Essays" (Scribner, 1922), is a genuine lure-paper.—The brief essay on Molière in Robert Lynd's "Books and Authors" (Putnam, 1923) is fresh and spirited.—Lecture XXI in the good August Wilhelm Schlegel's "Lectures on Dramatic Art and Literature" (Bell, 1922, Bohn's Standard Library) is solid, useful and very readable.—Curtis Hidden Page's complete translation of Molière (Putnam, 1908, French Classics for English Readers series) is a noble piece of book making in every respect. Dr. Page has the distinction of being the first to translate the verse plays of Molière into English verse, and his translation is vivacious and careful. His two stately volumes contain a significant introduction by Brander Matthews, a preface on the style of Molière by Dr. Page, a valuable introductory note to each play by him, and a good bibliography.—A satisfying edition of Molière for the reader having some familiarity with French is R. A. Waller's "The Plays of Molière" (Grant, 1907) for it contains the French text on the left hand page and Mr. Waller's translation into English prose on the right hand. There is an invaluable introduction of forty pages by George Saintsbury, a great authority on Molière, and interesting and beautifully executed plates.

## MONTAIGNE AND HIS "ESSAYS"

Edward Dowden's "Michel de Montaigne" (Lippincott, 1905, French Men of Letters series) is compact, careful and vivid. The bibliography is valuable, meaning much because, as Professor Dowden takes care to say, it was "derived almost exclusively from books on my own shelves."—A capital brief estimate—thirty pages—is the essay on Montaigne in Professor George Woodberry's "Great Writers" (Macmillan, 1912).—The classic essay on Montaigne in English is "Montaigne; or The Skeptic" in Ralph Waldo Emerson's "Representa-

tive Men." It should be read in the Centenary Edition of Emerson's works (Houghton Mifflin, 1903) for the sake of the eleven pages of notes by Dr. Edward Emerson.—Sir James Fitzjames Stephen's brief essay on Montaigne's essays in the first volume of his "Horæ Sabbaticæ" (Macmillan, 1892) is valuable for its terse treatment of certain large aspects of Montaigne. The three volumes of these essays are well worth owning.—Mark Pattison's masterly essay on Montaigne is now accessible in the first volume of "Modern English Essays" (Dent-Dutton, 1922), a charming collection.—An exquisite sidelight on Montaigne is provided by Chapter V, "Suspended Judgment," in Walter Pater's unfinished romance, "Gaston de Latour" (Macmillan, 1896, and since then thrice reprinted). It is in Pater's most delicate strain.—The essay on Montaigne in John Cowper Powys' "Suspended Judgments: Essays on Books and Sensations" (American Library Service, 1923) is intensely sympathetic and stimulating.—A useful book to put into the hands of a newcomer to Montaigne is Adolphe Cohn's selection of twenty-five of the best essays of Montaigne (Putnam, 1907, French Classics for English Readers series). There is an excellent biographical and critical introduction of thirty pages and a good bibliography. The translation Mr. Cohn uses is Florio's which was good enough for Shakespeare.—The newest translation of Montaigne's essays is by E. J. Trechmann (Oxford University Press, 1927). It represents years of toil and much devotion. The introduction by J. M. Robertson is important. There are two and one volume editions.

## OMAR AND THE "RUBÁIYÁT"

### (In FitzGerald's Version)

A delightful biography of the English poet who gave Omar Kháyyám his occidental fame is A. C. Benson's "Edward FitzGerald" (Macmillan, 1905, E. M. L. series).—Richard Henry Stoddard's "Under the Evening Lamp" (Scribner, 1892) contains a brief, sympathetic essay on Edward FitzGerald.—A satisfying edition of the Omar-FitzGerald "Rubáiyát" to own was published by Houghton Mifflin, 1894. It contains brief lives of Omar and FitzGerald, useful notes, and Elihu Vedder's drawings.

## PEPYS AND HIS DIARY

Percy Lubbock's "Samuel Pepys" (Scribner, 1909, Literary Lives series) is authoritative and spirited.—Henry B. Wheatley's edition of "Pepys' Diary" (Bell, 1893-99) contains essential biographical matter.—A convenient edition for travelers was published by Macmillan in

1922 with a pleasing introduction and extensive notes by G. Gregory Smith. But no ardent Pepysian is content until he owns Wheatley's monumental edition of the Diary, for it contains more of the original text of Pepys than any other edition.—Robert Louis Stevenson's essay on Pepys in his "Familiar Studies of Men and Books," in Vol. XIV of the Scribner edition of Stevenson's works, 1895, is in his best vein.—There is a neat little edition of Pepys—three hundred and forty pages called "Passages from the Diary of Samuel Pepys" (Boni & Liveright, 1921). Richard Le Gallienne made the selections and wrote a charming introduction. The price is ninety-five cents and it is remarkable value.

## PLUTARCH AND THE "PARALLEL LIVES"

Arthur Hugh Clough's revision of the translation of Plutarch's "Lives," called Dryden's, is the standard edition of Plutarch in English and it is admirable. The preface by Clough gives a rapid, masterly thirty-page survey of Plutarch. The notes appended to each volume are not abundant but are good. This edition was issued most recently in this country by Little, Brown in 1910, but unfortunately the plates from which it is printed have become worn.—Ralph Waldo Emerson's thirty-page essay on Plutarch in his "Lectures and Biographical Sketches" has sent thousands of readers to Plutarch. It should be read in the Centenary Edition of Emerson (Houghton Mifflin, 1904) in order to obtain Doctor Edward Emerson's notes on the essay.—The brief essay, "Plutarch's Anecdotes," in Robert Lynd's "Books and Authors" (Putnam, 1923) is a graceful chapter in a book beautiful in spirit and in format.—The brief estimate of Plutarch in William Roscoe Thayer's "The Art of Biography" (Scribner, 1920) is a valuable passage in a most pleasing little book.—Archbishop Trench's "A Popular Introduction to Plutarch" (1873) is an authority but is long out of print.

## POLO AND HIS TRAVELS

The monumental edition in English of "The Book of Ser Marco Polo the Venetian Concerning the Kingdoms and Marvels of the East" is the translation with copious commentary by Colonel Sir Henry Yule (Murray, 1903). It costs twenty-two dollars, but when you have it you have an incomparable edition of Marco and one of the finest pieces of editing ever done in the English language. Its machinery of maps and facsimiles, portraits and scenes, notes and bibliography is most satisfying.—A creditable cheap edition of the text appears in Every-

man's Library (Dent-Dutton, 1908; and reprinted four times since then) with a graceful introduction by John Masefield.

## SHAKESPEARE AND "HAMLET"

The supreme authority and guide for "Hamlet" study is Horace Howard Furness' edition of "Hamlet" in "A New Variorum Edition of Shakespeare" (Lippincott, 1905).—Dr. Maurice Francis Egan's "The Ghost in Hamlet, and Other Essays in Comparative Literature" (McClurg, 1906) contains stimulating essays on "Hamlet."—Georg Brandes' "William Shakespeare: A Critical Study" (Heinemann, 1902) is vivid, careful and alluring on all the plays and especially on "Hamlet."—Brander Matthews' "Shakespeare as a Playwright" (Scribner, 1913) is very valuable.—Beverley Warner's "Famous Introductions to Shakespeare's Plays" (Dodd, Mead, 1906) is almost indispensable for survey purposes, giving as it does the choicest specimens of eighteenth-century comment on Shakespeare.—Charles F. Johnson's "Shakespeare and His Critics" (Houghton Mifflin, 1909) is along similar lines, although containing fewer extracts and more original comment, and it covers a longer period of Shakespearean criticism.—Edward Dowden's "Introduction to Shakespeare" (Scribner, 1906) is brief but extraordinarily helpful.—The twelve-page essay on "Hamlet" in Giovanni Papini's "Four and Twenty Minds" (Crowell, 1922) is spirited and provocative.—John J. Chapman's "A Glance Toward Shakespeare" (Atlantic Monthly Press, 1922) is a small volume, 116 pages, richly repaying study.—The standard biography of Shakespeare, Sir Sidney Lee's "A Life of William Shakespeare" (Macmillan, 1909) is careful and thorough but not very alluring for a young reader.—The newest extensive biography is Joseph Quincy Adams' "A Life of William Shakespeare" (Houghton Mifflin, 1923). Its tone is sympathetic but temperate, and its illustrations are charming. It is well worth owning.—Oliphant Smeaton's "Shakespeare, His Life and Works" (Everyman's Library) is a model brief biography. It contains an invaluable table of the probable dates of composition of Shakespeare's plays and five precious pages of "Books Useful to the Student of Shakespeare."—William Allen Neilson and Ashley Horace Thorndike's "The Facts About Shakespeare" (Macmillan, 1913) is delightfully convenient to work with. Its "Index to the Characters," "Index of the Songs," and bibliography are most helpful.—Victor Hugo's "William Shakespeare" (McClurg, 1899) is rhapsodic, but irresistible if taken in one-hour readings.—Hermann Ulrici's "Shakespeare's Dramatic Art: And His Relation to Calderon and Goethe" (Chapman, 1846) is a noble and weighty work; nothing can supplant it.—The great survey book for Shakespeare's period and

the twenty-six years following is Prof. Felix E. Schelling's "Elizabethan Drama" (Houghton Mifflin, 1908). This is one of the monumental achievements of American scholarship and an honor to the University of Pennsylvania.

## SHAKESPEARE AND "KING RICHARD III"

A book of high value as a lure to and commentary on Shakespeare's chronicle plays is the late Beverley E. Warner's "English History in Shakespeare's Plays" (Longmans, 1899) because it is not only skilled pedagogy; it is charming literature. It should be in every school library.—Along similar lines, but not surpassing Warner, is J. A. R. Marriott's "English History in Shakespeare" (Chapman, 1918), a book which the Contemporary Review described as "a public service." —Engaging in spirit and containing a rich store of erudition is the late Franklin Head's "Richard the Third and the Primrose Criticism" (McClurg, 1887). The little volume, which is now a valued item in old book stores, is a vivacious reply to Lowell's somewhat acrimonious essay questioning Shakespeare's authorship of "King Richard III." That essay will be found in Vol. XI of the Standard Library Edition of Lowell's Works (Houghton Mifflin, 1892).—"The Last Plantagenet" in Henry Cabot Lodge's "Certain Accepted Heroes and Other Essays in Literature and Politics" (Harper, 1897), is a valuable study of King Richard.—The brief essay, "Shakespeare's English Kings," in Walter Pater's "Appreciations" (Macmillan, 1910) rewards two readings.—The chapter, "Shakespeare's Histories," in John Bailey's "The Continuity of Letters" (Clarendon Press, 1923), is almost invaluable.—Frederick W. Kilbourne's "Alterations and Adaptations of Shakespeare" (Badger, 1910) concisely and clearly differentiates the passages which Colley Cibber wrote into his version of "King Richard III" from the original passages. Mr. Kilbourne's service is important because Cibber's version held the stage up to the time of playgoers who are still going to plays. The book is an indispensable item in any Shakespeare collection.—For what the battle of Bosworth Field meant and what it led to the reader may well turn to Gladys Temperley's "Henry VII" (Houghton Mifflin, 1914) a pleasingly written book.—William Winter's "Shakespeare on the Stage," first series (Moffatt-Yard, 1911), contains vivid and scholarly studies of the acting of great men, and of some not so great, in the rôle of Richard III, as well as a brilliant survey of the play. The same volume does a similar service in connection with the play of "Hamlet" and the acting of it.

## STERNE AND "A SENTIMENTAL JOURNEY"

A biography of Sterne at once authoritative and beautifully written is Walter Sichel's "Sterne: A Study" (Lippincott, 1910). The plates are extremely interesting. Altogether a handsomely made book in every respect.—But perhaps the supreme authority of our time is Professor Wilbur Lucius Cross of Yale, whose "Life and Times of Laurence Sterne" (revised edition, Macmillan, 1925) is probably definitive. It certainly is an honor to American scholarship.—Professor Cross' commentary on Sterne in his "Development of the English Novel" (Macmillan, 1915) is valuable.—The best short life is H. D. Traill's "Sterne" (Macmillan, and cheaper edition, Harper, E. M. L. series), which is more or less founded on Fitzgerald's life of Sterne. —An admirable sketch of Sterne which satisfies the first cravings of a young reader appears in the Everyman's Library Edition of Sir Walter Scott's "Lives of the Novelists," a valuable book.—The vivid chapter entitled "The Novelists" in Taine's "History of English Literature" (Holt, 1872, and other editions) is a brilliant study of Sterne, Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, Smollett, and Goldsmith.—The essay on Sterne in Herbert Paul's "Men and Letters" (Lane, 1901) is remarkable for delicate sympathy.—The allusions to Sterne in the delightful and scholarly book, "Motives in English Fiction," by Robert Naylor Whiteford (Putnam, 1918), are alluring.—"Sterne and Thackeray," in Vol. II of Walter Bagehot's "Literary Studies" (Longmans, 1905, the Silver Library), is luminous and spirited and should be read in connection with Thackeray's essay on Sterne.

## STEVENSON AND "TREASURE ISLAND"

Despite the abundance of biographical and critical literature on Stevenson, the most illuminating book on and by him still is Sir Sidney Colvin's "Letters and Miscellanies of Robert Louis Stevenson" (Scribner, 1899; enlarged edition 1911).—Graham Balfour's "Life of Robert Louis Stevenson" (Scribner, 1901) is the standard biography but is conventional.—In the invaluable "Notorious Literary Attacks," edited by Albert Mordell (Boni & Liveright, 1926), appears William Ernest Henley's vigorously corrective essay, "R. L. S.," which created a hullabaloo among pious Stevensonians in 1901. It provides tart commentary on Graham Balfour's biography of Stevenson.—The essay on Stevenson in Henry James' "Notes on Novelists" (Scribner, 1914) is genial and intensely appreciative.—The essay, "An Adventurer in a Velvet Jacket," in Henry van Dyke's "Companionable Books" (Scribner, 1922) is in the same strain but less weighty.—Buy

no edition of "Treasure Island" that does not contain the map and Stevenson's prefatory essay entitled "My First Book—Treasure Island."—The newest book on Stevenson is vivacious and acute. It is Robert Lynd's "Robert Louis Stevenson" (Macmillan, 1927, E. M. L., new series).

## SWIFT AND "GULLIVER'S TRAVELS"

A thoroughly satisfying biography of Swift is Sir Henry Craik's "Life of Jonathan Swift, Dean of St. Patrick's, Dublin" (Macmillan, 1894). It is scholarly, earnest and eloquent.—Gerald P. Moriarty's "Dean Swift and His Writings" (Seeley, 1893) is good. It is more a literary study than a biography. The nine portraits are very fine.—Sir Leslie Stephen's "Swift" (Macmillan, 1882, E. M. L. series) is admirable. Chapter VIII is a seventeen-page survey of "Gulliver's Travels."—"The Prince of Journalists" in Herbert Paul's "Men and Letters" (Lane, 1901) is a rousing appreciation of Swift.—The essay on Swift in Professor Winchester's "An Old Castle and Other Essays" (Macmillan, 1922) is extensive and temperate. It is an excellent rapid survey.—A pleasing edition of "Gulliver's Travels" for young people was issued by Harper, 1913, with a brief introduction by William Dean Howells. Louis Rhead's drawings enliven the book.—The classic essays on Swift are Johnson's in his "Lives of the Poets," which is outdated as to detail but remains intensely readable; Hazlitt's penetrating estimate in his "Lectures on the English Poets," which is to be found in Vol. V of Waller and Glover's edition of the collected works of William Hazlitt (Dent-McClure, 1902); and Thackeray's in his "English Humorists of the Eighteenth Century," in Vol. VII of the Biographical Edition of Thackeray's works (Harper, 1899), which is extensive, picturesque and severe.—Macaulay's contrast between the wit of Swift and Addison in his essay on Addison is celebrated.—Giovanni Papini's essay on Swift and "Gulliver's Travels" in his "Four and Twenty Minds" (Crowell, 1922) is by way of becoming a classic among foreign appreciations, so ardent and illuminating is it.—The study of Swift in Taine's "English Literature" is rapid, forcible, vivid, and of especial value for its comment on Swift's "Drapier's Letters."—Sir Henry Craik's preface to his "Life of Jonathan Swift," already cited, is valuable for its rapid survey of the principal biographies of Swift.

## THACKERAY AND "HENRY ESMOND"

For knowledge of the periods and circumstances in which Thackeray's works were written, the Biographical Edition (Harper, 1899),

with its authoritative introductions by Thackeray's daughter, Lady Ritchie, is indispensable. These introductions were somewhat enlarged in the Centenary Edition of Thackeray (Macmillan, 1911).—As bearing on Mrs. Jane Octavia Brookfield, who in some attributes was the original of the Lady Castlewood of "Henry Esmond," "A Collection of Letters of Thackeray" (Scribner, 1890) is interesting, and is literature.—Austin Dobson's "De Libris" (Macmillan, 1908) contains brief but important essay on "Esmond."—Anthony Trollope's "Thackeray" (Macmillan, E. M. L. series) is authoritative, sufficiently detailed, and compact.—Charles Whibley's "William Makepeace Thackeray" (Dodd, Mead, 1903) is soberly written but good entertainment. —W. C. Brownell's "Victorian Prose Masters" (Scribner, 1902) contains a weighty essay on Thackeray.—The same critic is represented in "Novelists" in the Warner Classics series (Doubleday-McClure, 1899) by a briefer, lighter study of Thackeray.—"Thackeray and the English Novel" in John Bailey's "Continuity of Letters" (Clarendon Press, 1923) stirs to independent thinking.

## THOREAU AND "WALDEN"

William Ellery Channing's "Thoreau the Poet-Naturalist" (Goodspeed, 1902) is a great source book on Thoreau.—Henry S. Salt's "Life of Henry David Thoreau" (Scott, 1896, G. W. series) is the most easily manageable as well as the most sympathetic and searching biography of Thoreau.—Léon Bazalgette's "Henry Thoreau, Bachelor of Nature" (Harcourt-Brace, 1924) is an unusual and vivid study in the narrative style. Its chief value is many sidedness of presentation. —"Thoreau" in Emerson's "Lectures and Biographical Sketches" is indispensable.—"Thoreau" in Vol. I of Lowell's "Literary Essays" (Houghton Mifflin's Standard Library Edition of Lowell's works, 1899) tends to the supercilious but is valuable as antidote to excessive adulation of Thoreau.—"Thoreau's Wildness" in John Burroughs' "Literary Values" (Houghton Mifflin, 1902) is only six pages but more informative than most men's sixty.—"Henry David Thoreau: His Character and Opinions" in R. L. Stevenson's "Familiar Studies of Men and Books," is stimulating although cocksure.—The second volume of F. B. Sanborn's "Recollections of Seventy Years" (Badger, 1909) contains a mass of material, some of it very valuable, on Thoreau, Emerson, the Alcotts, the Hawthornes, and other Concord celebrities. The illustrations are of special interest.—But for complete understanding of Thoreau, three days in Concord and in Walden woods are worth many books.

## THUCYDIDES AND "THE PELOPONNESIAN WAR"

The translation of Thucydides' "History of the Peloponnesian War" by Benjamin Jowett (Clarendon Press, revised edition, 1900) with its extensive machinery of introduction, marginal analyses, notes and commentary, is the unerring guide to this masterpiece.—For a translation at once sympathetic, exact and notably vigorous, it would be hard to surpass Richard Crawley's in Everyman's Library (Dent-Dutton). The modesty and grace of Crawley's three-page introduction would alone make the volume a treasure. It is a model in style and spirit. Five useful maps.—Gilbert Murray's "Our Great War and the Great War of the Ancient Greeks" (Seltzer, 1920) is brief but extraordinarily stimulating.—In "The Legacy of Greece" (Clarendon Press, 1921) the essay, "Political Thought," by Alfred E. Zimmern, is valuable on the large aspects of Thucydides' service.—In the "Our Debt to Greece and Rome" series (Marshall Jones) the same author's "Greek Historians" meets the standard of a series every volume of which is distinguished.—"The Pageant of Greece," edited by R. W. Livingstone (Clarendon Press, 1923), contains a helpful chapter on Thucydides because copious extracts from "The Peloponnesian War" are connected by compact digests.

## TWAIN AND "HUCKLEBERRY FINN"

The outstanding sources—and they are delightful—of fact and comment on "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" are Albert Bigelow Paine's "Mark Twain, A Biography" (Harper, 1912); the same author's "Mark Twain's Letters Arranged with Comment" (Harper, 1917); "Mark Twain's Autobiography," with an introduction by Mr. Paine (Harper, 1924), and William Dean Howells' "My Mark Twain" (Harper, 1910).—The lecture entitled "The American Humorist, Mark Twain," in William Lyon Phelps' "Some Makers of American Literature" (Marshall Jones, 1923) is charming.—The essay, "Mark Twain's 'Life on the Mississippi,'" in Caroline Ticknor's "Glimpses of Authors" (Houghton Mifflin, 1922) is amusing and has a distinct value for collectors.—"Life on the Mississippi," by the way, is not only literature but an essential Baedeker to be read in connection with "The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn."—"Memories of Mark Twain" in Brander Matthews' "The Tocsin of Revolt and Other Essays" (Scribner, 1922) is full of intimate detail and is especially interesting on "Tom Sawyer" and "Huckleberry Finn."

## VERGOOSE AND "MOTHER GOOSE'S MELODIES"

An edition highly entertaining for its biographical data and notes is that of William A. Wheeler (Houghton Mifflin, 1878, and still being reprinted).

## WALTON AND "THE COMPLETE ANGLER"

A treasure of modern book making and editing which serves all the purposes of the reader of Walton's masterpiece is Richard Le Gallienne's edition of "The Complete Angler" (Lane, 1897). Its machinery of introduction, notes, appendices and bibliography is altogether admirable. The pictures by Edmund H. New are in the spirit of the book. A most satisfying edition to own.—A useful cheap edition of "The Angler" is that containing a brief but reasonably comprehensive introduction by Charles Hill Dick (Scott, 1895).—Brentano's neat little edition of "The Angler" (1901) in "The Sportsman's Classics" is perfect for the pocket.—The forty-page essay on Walton in James Russell Lowell's "Latest Literary Essays and Addresses" (Vol. XI in the Standard Library Edition of Lowell, Houghton Mifflin, 1892) is one of his best.—Andrew Lang's comprehensive essay on Izaak Walton, important bibliographically and critically, is to be found in Vol. III of "Modern English Essays" (Dent-Dutton, 1922), a delightful series of pocket volumes.—S. Martin's "Izaak Walton and His Friends" is ranked as an authority but I cannot speak of it from first hand knowledge.—The fourteen-page conversation between Walton, Cotton, and Oldways in the third series, "Dialogues of Literary Men," in Walter Savage Landor's "Imaginary Conversations" (Nimmo, 1883), is delicious. It is almost like having another chapter from Walton's own pen.

## WHITMAN AND "LEAVES OF GRASS"

The newest life of Whitman is John Bailey's "Walt Whitman" (Macmillan, 1926, new E. M. L. series now under J. C. Squire's editorship). It is more a critical study than a biography and it is extraordinarily sane.—Bliss Perry's "Walt Whitman: His Life and Works" (Houghton Mifflin, 1906, American Men of Letters series) is also sane, and it is biographically comprehensive.—John Burroughs' "Whitman: A Study" (Houghton Mifflin, 1896) is sympathetic, and it is literature.—Three years of absorbing conversation on this, that, and the other are recorded in Horace Traubel's "With Walt Whitman in Camden" (Doubleday, 1906; out of print).—William

Mackintire Salter's "Walt Whitman, Two Addresses" (Weston, 1889) comprises two twenty-four page discourses entitled "The Great Side of Walt Whitman" and "The Questionable Side of Walt Whitman." The little book is valuable.—The late Stuart P. Sherman's brief introduction to the Scribner edition, 1922, of "Leaves of Grass" in the Modern Student's Library, is masterly. He knew.—The essay on Whitman in Havelock Ellis' "The New Spirit" (Scott, 1892, Camelot series) is most stimulating.—Robert Louis Stevenson's essay on Whitman, in Vol. XIV, "Familiar Studies of Men and Books," in the Scribner edition of Stevenson, 1895, is a steadying estimate.—"Walt Whitman" in A. Clutton-Brock's "More Essays on Books" (Dutton, 1921) is vivacious and sensible.—"America in Whitman's Poetry" in Hamilton Wright Mabie's "Backgrounds of Literature" (Macmillan, 1911; cheaper issue by Grosset, Dunlap) is a shade smug but its closing verdict will quite possibly be the verdict of remote generations.—The ardent essay on Whitman in Giovanni Papini's "Four and Twenty Minds" (Crowell, 1922) is exhilarating.

## WYSS AND "THE SWISS FAMILY ROBINSON"

The best edition of "The Swiss Family Robinson" for grown-ups or for children was published in 1909 by Harper. It contains a pleasing introduction by William Dean Howells and brief bibliographical data. There is a map, and spirited pictures by Louis Rhead.

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